

Missouri Conservation Forums Autumn 2005

A Summary of Citizen Input



Public Profile 2-2005
Policy Coordination Unit
Missouri Department of Conservation
Jefferson City, Missouri

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Executive Summary

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) sponsored a series of eight Conservation forums in the fall of 2005. Their purpose was to seek citizen input regarding Department programs and activities. This report summarizes the content of the eight fall forums, which had a total attendance in excess of 433, including MDC staff.

These forums reflect the spirit of the Department's mission statement:

- To protect and manage the fish, forest and wildlife resources of the state.
- To serve the public and facilitate its participation in resource management activities.
- To provide opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy and learn about fish, forest and wildlife resources.

Facilitating public participation took center stage when John Hoskins became Director on July 1, 2002. Hoskins personally attended and led all eight fall forums in 2005, addressing most questions and concerns personally in front of the forum. He drew in staff with expertise in particular topics as needed, and continued many discussions during breaks and after the meeting formally adjourned.

Meetings were held:

Date	Region	City
September 22	Northeast (NE)	Memphis
September 27	St. Louis (SL)	St. Louis
September 29	Ozark (OZ)	Houston
October 4	Central (CE)	Camdenton
October 11	Kansas City (KC)	Sedalia
October 20	Northwest (NW)	Cameron
October 27	Southeast (SE)	Poplar Bluff
November 8	Southwest (SW)	Springfield

This report is organized into two major sections. The [Statewide Issues](#) section selects 12 broad topics that surfaced in several regions or that need statewide rather than regional resolution. These topics are listed in no particular order of importance:

Deer	Private Land	Turkey, Quail & Game Bird
Waterfowl	Furbearers	Fishing
Law Enforcement	Outreach and Education	Access for Disabled
Non-game Wildlife	Camping, Riding etc.	MDC's Job

The second major section is entitled [Regional Input](#) and focuses on topics that were regional in scope, or were raised in that region's forum but did not fit within one of the topical headings.

This year's report is somewhat different than in previous years, developed as a set of web pages rather than a printed document. It has been converted to a Portable Document Format (PDF) file which allows consistent printing on a variety of computer platforms. This may be done using a program called Adobe Acrobat Reader (copyright), which most new systems include or which is available for no-cost download at www.adobe.com. People may read the report on-line, print the whole document, or selected pages. (Note: to print pages using Acrobat, note that the page numbers at the bottom of pages are two less than the page number to enter for printing – because the cover pages are not numbered.) This approach encourages use of the internet, lets people choose what to print, and saves significant printing and mailing costs.

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A Message from John Hoskins

Director Missouri Department of Conservation

Welcome to our third year of fall public forums, one in each of the Department's eight administrative regions. When I first became Director in 2002, I committed to expanding public input into Department operations and decision-making. These forums provide one example of the many ways we listen and learn.

The Department is coming out of a multi-year fiscal slow down, just like all other levels of state government. Since 2000, our revenues have fluctuated widely. We spent a good deal of time reorganizing our operations to reduce expenses and shift more money to increase field work.

One important way to keep our fish, forest and wildlife programs moving forward has been to work with conservation partners, public and private, to expand upon what we could do if we went alone. The emphasis on partnerships was wise and we value the products of numerous efforts with non-profit groups, landowners, county commissions, city councils and government agencies.

Recently, I attended a conference sponsored by President Bush to promote the concept of "Cooperative Conservation" throughout federal government. It was an impressive line-up of government leaders in conservation-related fields – including ranchers, sportsmen, teachers, business executives and community activists. The conference theme was similar to what we were already doing in Missouri—fostering a collaborative backyard conservation ethic alongside conservation efforts on public lands. Listening to people from across the nation and across the philosophical divides reminded me how important it is that we collectively remain committed to progress through partnerships.

As Director of your Conservation Department, I can promise you that conservation is not delivered by government; it is delivered by people. We in Missouri have a 70-year legacy of this: voters used the constitution's initiative petition process in 1936 to create a citizen-led commission to oversee the Department, and in 1976 to fund expanded Department programs through a one-eighth of one percent sales tax. This formula works so well today that fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing and forest-related industries contribute over \$7 billion each year to Missouri's economy.

Nature knows no boundaries and it defies us when we try to establish them. A fence on your property provides no guarantees that you will keep nature inside your land anymore than it can ensure that you can keep it out. The devastation of our Gulf Coast and the city of New Orleans shockingly demonstrates that people are part of nature too. Water cannot always be controlled and now thousands of people are displaced from their homes and are in search of new and better living conditions. This tragedy highlights the national conversation needed to best determine how Americans can achieve a diverse quality of life and still respect Mother Nature.

The challenge of conservation in the 21st century is to achieve a balance between what it takes to make wildlife and forests healthy while serving the needs of our people and communities. This balancing act is a positive debate about what we value and what we will modify to achieve it.

At the Department of Conservation, we spend a significant portion of our budget studying fish, forests and wildlife. But we also spend significant portions to engage hunters, anglers, outdoor enthusiasts, landowners, equestrians, local governments and our neighbors in the day-to-day business of wildlife management. We've learned some interesting things, yet every forum confirms that there is no one solution that fits everyone's interests. Therefore, we must work cooperatively with all groups to form the future we each desire.

Through these forums, we want you to know that we welcome your input and are committed to listening every day.

MDC Regions and Regional Offices



Central Regional Office, 1907 Hillcrest Drive, Columbia, MO 65201; 573-882-8388; [CE web page](http://www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/central/) (www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/central/)

Kansas City Regional Office, 3424 N.W. Duncan Road, Blue Springs, MO 64015; 816-655-6250; [KC web page](http://www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/kcmetro/) (www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/kcmetro)

Northeast Regional Office, 2500 S. Halliburton, Kirksville MO 63501; 660-785-2420; [NE web page](http://www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/neast/) (www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/neast)

Northwest Regional Office, 701. N.E. College Drive, St. Joseph, MO 64507; 816-271-3100; [NW web page](http://www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/nwest/) (www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/nwest)

Ozark Regional Office, P.O. Box 138, 551 Joe Jones Boulevard West Plains, MO 65775; 417-256-7161; [OZ web page](http://www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/ozark/) (www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/ozark)

St. Louis Regional Office, 2360 Highway D, St. Charles, MO 63304; 636-441-4554; [SL web page](http://www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/stlouis/) (www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/stlouis)

Southeast Regional Office, 2302 County Park Dr., Cape Girardeau, MO 63701; 573-290-5730; [SE web page](http://www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/seast/) (www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/seast)

Southwest Regional Office, 2630 N. Mayfair, Springfield, MO 65803; 417-895-6880; [SW web page](http://www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/swest/) (www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/swest)

Statewide Issues

These sections record citizen input on 12 topics that generated comment in multiple regions. After notes were compiled on each regional forum, these comments were removed from the [Regional Sections](#) and placed into one of the Statewide Issue sections.

Order of listing does not reflect any intent to prioritize what was said. Comments recorded are not direct quotes, rather an abbreviated summary of what we heard. Responses by MDC staff to similar questions in different regions have been edited into a single comment under the heading "What MDC Said."

Deer	Private Land	Turkey, Quail & Game Bird
Waterfowl	Furbearers	Fishing
Law Enforcement	Outreach and Education	Access for Disabled
Non-game Wildlife	Camp, Ride & Recreate	MDC's Job

The intent is to collect comments on issues of broad interest which are likely to be studied and resolved on a statewide basis. This makes it easier to see the range of input, sometimes conflicting, on statewide issues. It also makes it easier for those working on specific topics -- e.g. waterfowl seasons or public use regulations -- to analyze, understand and make changes.

There are many references to Conservation Areas, abbreviated as "CA" in most cases. Generally, comments about specific areas are included in the Regional Section where the CA is located, noting the region where the comment was made if it is different. Throughout statewide issue sections, the region originating each comment is noted in parentheses at the end of the comment, with the following abbreviations:

CE = Central Region	OZ = Ozark Region
KC = Kansas City Region	SE = Southeast Region
NE = Northeast Region	SW = Southwest Region
NW = Northwest Region	SL = St. Louis Region

Deer

Missourians interact with deer in many ways, and deer are important for many reasons -- economic, social, cultural and ecological. Many interactions are positive but some are not. It was not long ago that most people remembered when deer were scarce, and seeing one was a rare treat. Today, deer are often seen and it is easy to forget that they were once regarded as unusual.

Abundance produces both opportunities and problems. Today's hunters have the opportunity to legally take many more deer than they could even a decade ago. At the same time, deer in some areas increasingly cause problems for farmers and gardeners by damaging crops or ornamental plantings. Deer/vehicle collisions are a major concern in some areas, especially in urbanized areas where harvest is difficult or prohibited by local ordinance.

Deer hunting is an important tradition in many Missouri families, a recreation involving almost one-half million people. Deer hunting has huge resource and economic impacts. Missouri deer hunters directly spend \$400 million annually, and generate at least \$800 million in business activity. Many small businesses depend on deer hunting to create significant demand for food, fuel and lodging between the summer tourist season and December holidays. Hunting is the major control on deer populations, which are no longer limited by big predators like wolves and mountain lions.

"Balance" between the good and the bad effects of our now healthy deer herd is one major challenge facing MDC today. For decades we worked to restore and protect deer. By the 1990s, however, it was clear that restoration work was largely complete and that for many Missourians, the priority had shifted to "control." Deer regulations have been significantly liberalized in the last decade, leading to progress in controlling herd-associated problems. Missouri hunters took 26,646 more deer in 2004 than 2003.

In 2003, a major revision in the Department's deer management program was initiated. Over thirty meetings were held around the state where citizens looked at several options for changing the framework. Options included ideas like "earn-a-buck," which would require taking a doe before being allowed to take a buck; moving the season out of the rutting season (when bucks are less cautious); and an antler-point restriction. The clear preference among those who participated was to try the latter.

This resulted in a regulation restricting buck harvest to those with four-points or more on one-side, begun in 29 pilot counties in 2004. Results are being watched carefully for three to five years. Following the 2006 season, data should be adequate to evaluate whether the rule achieves the desired results, and that data will be shared with the public. With continued cooperation and communication, Missouri can keep a healthy herd and balance the broad mix of public desires for deer enjoyment and control.

What MDC Heard . . .

Health of the Deer Herd

- How concerned is the Department about chronic wasting disease (CWD)? How will new check-in procedures work with CWD management? What would you do if it is discovered? (CE)
- Tell me something about blue tongue disease and concerns about it. (CE)
- People sometimes point a finger at Conservation because of too many deer, but is the problem really with private landowners? Do we need to do a better job educating them about their role in deer management? (NE)
- Chronic wasting disease is a big problem that is going to get bigger for MDC. It started at Ft. Collins Colorado where they experimented with feed. The disease started with those penned animals and then spread to the wildlife. (SW)
- Was the CWD found in Illinois close to Missouri? (OZ)

The Four-Point Rule for Bucks in Pilot Counties

- A lot of young bucks were killed and left in the field last year, unreported. That doesn't do any good for the goal of herd control. The regulations should adopt an earn-a-buck approach. (NE)
- Wouldn't it be better to move the season to avoid the rut? That would make it harder to take bucks, and lead to increased doe harvest. (NE)
- Move to a quota system of so-many deer per county. I would like to see a separate deer season for pistol-hunting and separate or concurrent system for crossbow during regular archery season. (SL)
- Can MDC let young people and the disabled be exempt from the 4-point antler restrictions? (KC)
- I WOULD LIKE TO SEE CALLAWAY COUNTY GET THE ANTLER RESTRICTION. (WRITTEN-SL)
- I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE ANTLER POINT RESTRICTION EXPANDED STATEWIDE FOR A PERIOD OF TIME. (WRITTEN – CE)
- The 4-point antler restriction should end because it puts a special burden on the "little guy." One friend with a progressive disability – 2005 may be his last year able to hunt – will only get a brief time in the field. He's not likely to see a deer he can legally take. Another friend took his son to hunt, but the lad won't go again: he saw only two deer, neither legal to take. Can MDC at least let young people and the disabled be exempt from antler restrictions? (KC)
- Are there plans to expand the "4-point rule" to other counties this year? (NW)
- MAKE POINT RESTRICTIONS STATEWIDE. (WRITTEN -- SE)
- I like all MDC's deer changes except the point restriction. We used to hunt every year in some of the restricted counties, but don't go up to that area any more because we want meat, not trophies. We don't want to pass up small deer. If north Missouri gets big bucks from this rule, I fear that word will get around and all that land will go onto lease-hunting. That will reduce our use, and end up reducing the doe-take. (SW)

Seasons

- Why were days added to the bow season on the front end of the season? It is not the best hunting, and often too hot to get meat out of the woods quickly enough. (NE)
- Would you consider a special 2-day turkey season and 2-day deer season for handicapped hunters, similar to the youth season? (OZ)
- I am a bow hunter and feel MDC is squeezing us out of the season. The early extension of the season is too hot, and expanding turkey season throughout October makes bow hunting a lot less than it was. I like to hunt turkeys, but don't buy a fall turkey tag because I prefer to bow hunt. Can you move some of turkey season into September or January, and give bow hunters back their time to hunt in October? I might buy a turkey tag then. It frankly is not safe to have camouflaged bow hunters in the trees and turkey hunters with shotguns working the ground below. (NW)
- Twenty-two people hunt on my land during deer season, but I'd like to have more, especially during the bow season. What would it hurt to allow crossbows to be used in the bow season? WRITTEN: PLEASE LEGALIZE THE CROSSBOW FOR THE ARCHERY DEER SEASON. OR ARE THE LONGBOW PURISTS CONTROLLING MDC ARCHERY POLICY FOR THE REST OF THE STATE? HOW WOULD CROSSBOW HUNTERS INTERFERE WITH LONG BOW HUNTERS? (NW)
- Why did the Department extend fall turkey season? I don't like to bow hunt with turkey hunters in the woods beneath my stand, and it has changed my whole outlook on going into timber in October. I am scared to put my kids out with camo and bows when turkey hunters with shotguns may mistake them for game. I think two weeks of fall turkey hunting is plenty, and would rather have two weeks to bow hunt deer without turkey hunters to consider. If the objective is to kill more birds, just use the old season but allow another bird to be taken. (NW)
- I have a lot of friends who used to take wives, daughters and sons bow hunting, but don't do so now because of the turkey hunters in the woods. I can think of at least ten women who used to go but don't go now. (NW)
- I'm a landowner and want a more liberal deer season for landowners – maybe any method from start of bow season to end of January. When I go out during the regular season, the deer are spooked and harder to

hunt. Landowners would be more likely to let others use their land if they could hunt outside the 12-day season. We'd also be better able to keep populations in check on our lands. (SW)

- My compliments on all you are doing right! I especially like the youth deer season. I would like to see fall bow extension moved from October to December. (SW)
- I'd like archery deer season continuous through firearms season and don't mind wearing orange if that's the requirement. (SW)
- I would like to see you move muzzleloader deer season so that it's not directly behind the firearms season when deer are so skittish. Consider a two-day muzzleloading season in October and another later in the year. Most muzzleloader hunters do not want to hunt directly after the firearms season. (SW)

Other Deer Regulations

- MDC should not have eliminated antlerless permits on some of its public areas to allow herd recovery, because that is the only place some "little guys" can get to hunt. You need to open public land to deer hunting. When MDC evaluates data on preferences, it is important that you distinguish the needs of public-land hunters from those of private-land hunters. (KC)
- "Quality Deer Management" is a special interest of some, but not of most "little guys." Missouri has quality deer already: Boone & Crockett list Missouri tied with Ohio for 3rd in the nation, beating out Texas, Minnesota, and several other states that people trumpet for their "big bucks." (KC)

Deer Damage

- Don't forget the constituents who are being killed or injured on the roads, and others who pay higher insurance because of deer/vehicle collisions. (NE)

Telecheck

- I have heard a lot negative comments about the Telecheck system. Some say this will decimate the deer herd. For example, some call in to report before they even take a deer, and feel like they then have license to do whatever they want. (SE)
- Will telecheck connect with a real-time database? (SE)
- Telecheck is great! It has already saved me gas, time and money. (SW)
- Telecheck is convenient and may work fine in firearms season, but I'm not sure it does in bow season. I see coon hunters out carrying deer guns, and know you can't tell a bullet from an arrow hole over the phone. Extending the bow season on the front may add to this problem if it adds temptation for other early season hunters. (SW)

Youth Hunting

- I like the youth season, but why not schedule it earlier? I like to take my son out, but as it is, I get a late start for the hunting I want to do. (NE)
- The youth season puts kids in the field with guns at the same time bowhunters are out. (NE)

Miscellaneous

- Is the idea of elk reintroduction dead? (OZ)
- Kansas has what it calls a "Walk-in hunting" program in which the state leases land from the private sector and allows people to hunt on it. Is MDC considering doing something like that here? (NW)
- I would like to see more help for Share-The-Harvest. Can MDC contribute more to pay for processing, and perhaps look for ways to distribute more widely than the local area if need be? (NW)
- Have you considered lotteries for managed deer hunts and waterfowl reservations -- like the western states use -- to provide for longer range planning by hunters? (SE)

What MDC Said . . .

Health of the Deer Herd

- *We tested intensively for 3 years to find if chronic wasting disease (CWD) was present in Missouri, over that time testing at least 200 deer in every county. All tests came back negative. There is a state plan for what to do if CWD is found (as there is for several different animal diseases), worked out in conjunction with other potentially affected agencies including Agriculture. MDC's response to CWD will be to focus on the area of the outbreak, and work to substantially reduce density and limit its spread. Our major concern is that CWD might be imported in captive cervids brought from other states. The closest cases of CWD were in northwest and north central Illinois counties, near the Wisconsin line.*
- *Blue tongue is the common name for epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD). Outbreaks occur periodically when deer concentrations are high and in certain weather conditions – for example in this year's summer drought. The disease is transmitted by biting flies known as midges, and symptoms include excessive salivation, weakness, stiffness or lameness and sores on the tongue, mouth and hooves.*

Four-Point Rule

- *Antler-point restrictions are rooted in Missouri's need to change the deer management paradigm. Instead of public concern to restore and protect deer, the dominant message MDC heard in the 1990s was to control numbers. We held public meetings to explain our options, and the point rule was the hands-down favorite with participants – a preference confirmed by surveys in the field. The idea was popular enough that several counties asked to be added to our proposed small list of pilot counties. Our purpose is to find out if this regulation will reduce the proportion of does to bucks in north Missouri. Some public meeting participants may have preferred the four-point rule because they see it as what's called Quality Deer Management (QDM) -- i.e. saving young bucks to become bigger bucks. However, the MDC objective is to control herd density at levels most people, including landowners, find acceptable. By limiting the number of legal bucks, the likelihood of taking more does goes up.*
- *MDC plans to finish the pilot-study of the 4-point restriction before making any judgment. Results were mixed the first year, but after 3-5 years we should know whether the regulation works. If not, we will try different strategies until we find one that does.*
- *Last year Missourians killed 26,646 more deer than the year before. If things happen as expected, hunters should see more eligible deer in years two and three than they did in year one. We will give everyone a chance to look at that data with us and help decide whether this rule works or whether something else should be tried.*
- *We will consider your suggestions about exemptions to the four-point rule for first-time or disabled hunters. We like new hunters to experience success, and consider programs to help disabled hunters very important. MDC has demonstrated its desire to make it easier to participate in hunting by dropping the price for antlerless permits and increasing the numbers people can take.*

Seasons

- *We will consider having a special season for disabled deer hunters, but have so far been approaching disabled hunter needs with managed hunts on MDC and Corps of Engineers lands. These hunts are organized in conjunction with cooperator organizations who assist hunters in various ways as needed.*
- *Bow hunting is still a growing sport and the competition for fall hunting dates is a classic "conflict management" issue for managers. One of the biggest limitations people say keeps them from hunting is "lack of time," so we try to make seasons as long as possible. There simply are not enough days to meet all needs without some conflicts. Fall turkey hunting is less popular than in spring, but the extension was meant to expand opportunity. There was no compelling biological reason not to expand. We did not expect conflicts to be a problem on private lands, thinking landowners would not likely allow both turkey and bow hunters at the same time, but public land may be a bigger problem. We survey turkey hunters to guide decisions like this, and will continue to track all opinions. We have not previously considered the suggestion to move the turkey extension into January, but will look at the possibility.*

- *Whenever it's been suggested to add crossbow hunting to the bow season, bow hunting enthusiasts have objected strongly. This is not a biological issue but one of balancing competing user-interests. Note that people can use crossbows at any time you can use firearms, an opportunity bow hunters don't have. The issue continues to be discussed, and rules could be changed. However, that is not the majority view heard at the 2004 deer management meetings.*
- *The idea of an extended landowner season is interesting, and we will take it under advisement. Private landowners are important. Herd control depends on them, and we want to encourage and help them deal with problems. On the other hand, wildlife ownership in North America is public, partly in reaction to the European system where kings and barons kept game on their land to themselves. We don't want to give landowners any unfair advantage, or to discourage hunters who don't have land from staying active as hunters and conservationists.*
- *The main reason behind our early archery season extension was that the highest number of vehicle/deer collisions is in early fall, and every deer taken early may help reduce that. Missouri archery hunters took 5041 deer between September 15th and 30th this year.*
- *The idea of extending archery hunting through firearm season can be considered, but it is more a question of permit than permissibility: people are allowed to hunt with a bow in firearms season provided they have a firearms permit.*

Other Deer Regulations

- *Unlike private land, most public land faces very high hunting pressure. The overall strategy to control deer focuses on solving a problem mainly on private land – there are very few counties where MDC land is as much as 2% of the county area. If we don't limit harvest on MDC areas, many people don't have a place where they are likely to enjoy a successful hunt. That means rules on MDC areas will often be more restrictive than they are on surrounding land where deer are more abundant.*

Deer Damage

- *Statewide, we have not seen an increase in deer/vehicle collisions but this will vary regionally. Missouri deer/vehicle collision rates are lower than in many nearby states and counts have remained stable over the last decade. Highest collision rates are in urban areas where hunting is limited. Controlling collisions involves the whole herd, not just the part that lives on areas MDC owns. Statewide we own less than 2% of the land.*

Telecheck

- *There is a lot of public debate about Telecheck, and we debated it internally before implementing it. Like any system, it has both good points and bad. First, we tested it to see if we could get the sort of statistical information we need to manage the herd, finding no real difference between Telecheck and check station data. Concerns center around enforcement, and a lot of people thought that having to go to a check station made poaching a lot harder. We are not sure check stations were a deterrent to those who willfully flout the law. Telecheck is a major convenience for honest hunters. MDC will save six hundred thousand dollars this year alone by not operating check stations, and hunters this year should save about \$1.3 million dollars by not having to drive every deer to a check station. Agents get some advantages, too, including more time in the field and "instant access" to data. We have already made some cases where a permit was bought only a few minutes before a deer is tagged! Telecheck is being carefully monitored. If it produces more problems than it cures, the Conservation Commission can go back to the old system.*
- *Archery season is a concern for Telecheck, with people suspecting the call-in system will make it easy to report a deer illegally taken with firearms as an archery kill. We are not sure that check stations were that big a deterrent to people who choose to break the law, but we are watching and can change back if we see a lot of problems.*

Miscellaneous

- *The urban counties portion, youth portion, and archery season early in the fall help reduce the herd. Timing may not be ideal for the hunters involved, but there are only so many weeks of optimum hunting and*

weather each fall and the main seasons have lengthened. Extended seasons provide additional opportunity, and have already taken significant numbers of deer.

- *MDC has considered something like the Kansas "walk-in hunting" program. Two things are necessary for implementing it: adequate statutory authority to make landowners comfortable that they are protected from liability, and evidence that landowners would embrace the program. We currently have neither.*
- *Elk reintroduction was seriously considered a few years ago, with divided opinion whether or not it would be good. The idea is pretty well dead now due to chronic wasting disease concerns.*
- *Share-The-Harvest is a successful program that provided 275,000 pounds of meat to people who needed it last year. It is actually a program of the Conservation Federation of Missouri (CFM), but MDC supports it strongly. CFM funds much of it privately, but has not been able to generate all that is needed. Last year, MDC put in \$100,000. We want this program to grow but consider one of its best parts to be private sector participation. It could actually weaken the program for MDC to fund it fully.*
- *The regulations committee is looking at a preference point system which allows special hunt applicants to build up points over time and issuing permits to people with the most points. A task force has provided a report on some options, and we hope for a recommendation within a few months, with Conservation Commission consideration possible by next fall.*

Private Land

Private landowners choose how they manage their property. Fortunately, many choose to manage in ways friendly to forests, fish and wildlife. MDC works with landowners on a strictly voluntary basis. We believe success stems not from the Department's goals, but from the wishes of Missourians to do the right thing. MDC does not regulate private land, and likes it that way. We see our job being to provide good information, offer advice based on sound science, and recommend practices that private landowners can use to accomplish their own conservation-friendly land use goals.

The Conservation Commission took a big step in 2000 by creating the Private Land Services Division to expand traditional services to landowners. This decision reflected the reality that 93% of Missouri's land is in private ownership. Indeed, MDC owns less than two percent of the land statewide. The control of plentiful species (like deer and furbearers) and renewed prosperity for declining species (like quail or prairie chickens) depends on private land management.

Expanded private land services have been popular and building the Private Land Services Division has been a challenge during the recent years of uncertain state revenue. The Conservation Commission has been determined to move ahead, and during this time shifted many positions internally to add more Private Land Specialists. The bottom line: significantly better ability to meet the needs of landowners asking for help to do the right things.

What MDC Heard . . .

MDC's Private Land Services

- Conservation has come a long way and MDC has improved since I started watching years ago. Adding the Private Land Specialists is one of MDC's best decisions. They help and there is almost too much demand. You risk burning these people out with this, and you really need to hire more of them. (OZ)
- MDC pays some farmers to leave in one row of crops for game, but there is not enough supervision to assure the right results. (SL)
- When you have classes in better ways to manage habitat, do many landowners who lease their land show up? It seems that the problem of controlling deer cannot be solved unless everyone knows and does their part. (NE)
- MDC's budget is \$151 million/year, but less than 1% of that comes back in the form of cash assistance to the landowners. With 93% of land in private hands, why not spend more to help landowners do things on the ground? (NE)
- I have some land in CRP, and don't think MDC and NRCS (the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service) work very well together. NRCS people tell me MDC is behind rules that prohibit mowing CRP land before July. To control noxious weeds, I need to mow them before they make seed. I think it would benefit wildlife more to get rid of the noxious weeds than to have the undisturbed nesting season. (NW)
- I appreciate you guys! When landowners like me call on MDC for help, you are always there and you help. (NW)
- As landowners, we like what you do and appreciate a shift in mentality toward more respect for the importance and rights of private landowners. This has created a better environment for conservation progress. (SE)
- My concern is small game, especially quail. Your book *On the Edge* is good, but generally you are not getting enough good information out where it needs to be. I hear a lot about MDC talking with landowners, but not enough action. MDC lands need a lot of work, and I don't see it getting done. (SW)
- I heard the gentleman concerned about programs to help on his grasslands to restore quail, and want to assure him that lots of programs are available to help on private land. Work with MDC's staff, because they keep up on both the right ways to manage and the sources of funds. (SW)

Federal Programs

- Many federal programs were designed to fix land that people had not taken care of, and basically rewarded bad land stewardship. Some people who always did the right thing can't get federal payments but face the same economic temptations and demands as everyone else. Find ways to help the good stewards survive. (NE)
- The year 2007 will be a big one for Conservation Reserve Program signup. Proposed changes, backed by MDC and conservation organizations, will replace practices I like to use with some I don't. This will lead to reduced sign-up, and land now in CRP going out of the program. (NE)
- Taking away the mowing practice is a bad deal, and burning is not always a good substitute: on my farm, burns led to erosion, part of what the farm bill is designed to control. Farmers will drop out if they have to use some of these practices. (NE)
- Judge farmers based on results, not the tools they use to get them. CRP will lose my 700 acres if you try to tell me how to manage it. Federal staff point to MDC as the cause of changes proposed in the practices. (NE)
- One problem for landowners wanting to restore quail habitat is that federal payment for quail practices requires that the land was tilled in the last 3 years. Grassland that hasn't been tilled may still be poor habitat. Why not make funds available to improve it on those sites? (SW)

Miscellaneous

- Does MDC work with groups like FFA and 4-H to get the next generation of farmers involved in conservation? (CE)
- Consider developing some kind of conservation easement program for private landowners who want their land to stay wildlife-friendly rather than developed and stripped of habitat. (NE)

What MDC Said . . .

Federal Programs

- *CRP is a federal program with funding that dwarfs MDC's budget. The 1985 farm bill focused on erosion, but the 1997 bill put equal weight on erosion and wildlife. We don't know exactly what the 2007 bill will bring, but expect it to continue to emphasize wildlife, and support practices based on program goals and actual conditions. Much CRP land that supported wildlife when first taken out of production is no longer doing so. It would not be responsible to continue funding practices that, on the whole, are not meeting CRP goals. MDC's role is not to define program goals, but to advise whether or not certain practices achieve them.*
- *MDC payments to private land are limited. They are intended to help those who do not participate in federal programs and provide for some needs that federal programs don't cover. MDC normally chooses instead to accomplish conservation objectives by helping people use available federal program dollars and practices effectively. This directs more dollars to conservation-friendly projects than MDC's budget can afford. It also helps assure a unified message so one part of government is not trying to undo what another part pays for.*
- *MDC makes recommendations to NRCS, but we don't make the rules for CRP practices. CRP money is federal and comes through the Farm Services Agency. It has a state technical committee that sets the rules. We support much of what they try to do, but are not always happy with decisions made, either.*
- *The 2002 farm bill improved programs, and we work for further improvements in the 2007 bill. We agree that it would be good if funding were available to improve habitat on areas not tilled recently, and hope you will work with our staff to find options for funding such improvements.*

Miscellaneous

- *MDC works with many organizations to engage the youths who will be tomorrow's agriculturalists. We see farmers today accepting practices that would not have been considered a few decades ago.*

- *The Conservation Commission has made a commitment to quail restoration, but success depends almost entirely on whether enough landowners make the commitment, too. MDC does not regulate land use. We work cooperatively to provide advice and help to private landowners. We know there is much to do, and a lot so far has been in talking stages. We are, however, now in the first few months of a ten-year plan. We hope you will be noticing more results over the coming years.*

Turkey, Quail, and Other Game Birds

Missouri is reputed to have the best turkey hunting in the nation. This reflects a great conservation success story and provides high quality recreation and many positive economic impacts to the state. It was not always so: turkeys nearly disappeared from Missouri in the early part of the twentieth century. They were brought back with a science-based program combining habitat improvement, restocking, and protection.

Quail provide a less satisfying story, declining for several decades not only in Missouri but every other state in their range. There is a nationwide effort to reverse the decline, and there is consensus among experts that habitat is the major underlying problem behind declining quail populations. Good quail habitat was often the by-product of agricultural practices in widespread use through mid-twentieth century, but not today.

Many factors affect quail, including predators and chemicals, but these factors do not seem to be a problem where habitat is good. Because so many factors are involved in quail decline, no simple "quick fix" will bring them back.

Creating habitat to benefit quail will also benefit a wide range of species that have similarly declined. Stopping and reversing downward population trends is a much more difficult task than it was for more versatile species like deer, turkey and geese.

The Conservation Commission has made a commitment to quail restoration. MDC's Private Land Services Division is in the forefront of efforts to improve the status of quail, but success depends for the most part on decisions made by private sector landowners. Landowners as well as hunters, birders and private organizations are essential to efforts that improve habitat and increase other landowners' interest and awareness.

What MDC Heard . . .

Quail

- What does the Conservation Commission consider to be the biggest predator of quail? I think red-tailed hawks and turkeys are the top two. (NE)
- I know MDC is emphasizing quail management, and am actively managing my own 120 acres and doing the right things to attract quail. However, I wonder: are there enough quail left to repopulate the area if I get habitat right? (CE)
- Thank you for partnerships with Quail Unlimited (QU). I appreciate MDC's increased emphasis on quail, and want to "keep your feet to the fire!" I'd like to know if you have mechanisms in place to track progress of regional quail plans and evaluate success over time. I also note that a lot of QU members still seem unaware of all MDC is doing. You may need a more focused publication on the program, because I'm not sure the articles in the *Missouri Conservationist* and *All Outdoors* are getting the message across. (KC)
- Turkey populations are getting really big today, and I think they are hurting quail. For quail, the wild turkey is a predator that was mostly absent fifty years ago but is abundant today – a "barnyard chicken gone wild." Increase the length of turkey season to reduce turkey populations and have less effect on quail. (SW)

Turkey

- Is there still discussion of all-day turkey hunting? (NE)
- Why limit turkey hunters to one bird the first week of the spring season? Eliminating that rule would get more hunters out of the woods quickly, reducing the crowding that detracts from hunting and leads to accidents. (NE)
- Would you consider a special 2-day turkey season and 2-day deer season for handicapped hunters, similar to the youth season? (OZ)

- One issue I hear about is the growing population of turkeys in NW Missouri, a problem for many farmers. (NW)
- SHORTEN FALL TURKEY SEASON BACK TO TWO WEEKS. (WRITTEN -- SE)
- I would like to see more archery-only areas for hunting turkeys -- and a "ditto" from a second participant. (SW)
- I'd like to see the turkey season extended a couple weeks for archery only. (SW)

MDC Areas

- Some CAs are poorly managed for upland game birds. (SL)
- There is way too much fescue on MDC Areas, and the Department needs to lead by example in its removal. Work with Monsanto and others to get rid of the fescue because it's killing the quail. (SL)

"Put and Take" Hunting

- I follow MDC's work for quail restoration and am concerned. Upland bird hunting is "almost non-existent." No quail leads to no dogs, closing an important avenue for getting youngsters interested. MDC should offer controlled pheasant hunting on areas like Busch or Columbia Bottom. Since you don't, I go to Illinois for it and see a lot of Missouri license plates there. Illinois has a successful 30-year old program that should be tried here. (SL)
- I back up what the others have said about programs for pheasant releases in St. Louis and Kansas City. Let the young people find out about these game species. There are things you are missing. I know the Department hates to start a "game farm" program. Try to work with the penitentiary system to get men to work and manage the game farms. A lot of your areas could incorporate programs to release pheasants. Pennsylvania tried it (game farming) and harvests 2 million a year, and many say the best part of their job is to see the young people come in smiling. There are plenty of opportunities available for youth for duck, deer and turkey hunting but something needs to be done to get youth interested in upland game birds, bird dogs, and flushing dogs. (SL)
- MDC does a great job in a lot of areas but I concur with comments about releasing and hunting released quail. You could run this program similarly to the way MDC runs the trout areas. (SL)

Miscellaneous

- Can you open crow season a month earlier? They do more damage in October than later (notably to pecan growers). (SE)

What MDC Said . . .

- *It may be time to take another look at put-and-take hunting of pheasants or quail, but such programs provide short-term recreation effort rather than long-term conservation. Normally, MDC puts money in habitat that will produce and carry a species over the long haul.*
- *There may be more we could do to help young people learn about upland bird hunting. It might encourage people to know that Missouri leads the nation today in recruitment of young hunters.*
- *Crows are covered under the international Migratory Bird Treaty, so federal regulations influence these seasons. However, we will look at changing seasons if that is within our authority.*

Quail

- *People who work to build good quail habitat reasonably wonder if there are enough quail around to repopulate. We can't be sure, but our experience is that quail will find good habitat eventually. Neither decline nor recovery happens overnight. The Conservation Commission is committed to reversing the quail decline, and if current strategies don't succeed, the Department will try something else.*
- *Quail are in trouble in all states across their range, and the trend appears to be driven by changes to habitat that result from land use decisions. In Missouri 93% of the land is managed by private landowners.*

- *We are monitoring and evaluating the quail program, but trying to avoid a big pile of paperwork that diverts staff from getting field work done. We have standard “accomplishment monitoring” as part of our timesheet/budget process. We track acres of CP-33 projects. Regions compare accomplishments to goals, and statewide we continue our roadside counts. We also have some in-depth studies underway on what motivates landowners. The bottom line is that there is no simple way to count success, but we work at it. We always track what we do, how much we spend, and try to measure what we accomplish.*

Turkey

- *MDC continues to weigh many ideas for revising turkey regulations. Missouri turkey hunting is among the best in the nation and other states with more liberal rules often wonder at our secret. One thing that has set Missouri apart is consistency, so the Conservation Commission looks very cautiously at making changes to a system that is working better than anyone else’s. With that said, the scientific data does not offer compelling reasons to either keep or change rules limiting to one bird in the first week of spring season or morning-only hunting.*
- *Missouri can be proud that our turkey flock has grown us into the #1 turkey state in nation. Our spring turkey season alone generates about \$30 million for Missouri’s economy.*
- *If turkey numbers are so high that crop damage results, we can help. One way we have helped already is by liberalizing regulations to encourage more harvest by hunting – hunters can now take two turkeys in the fall season, both on the same day. Landowners can – indeed have to be – part of the solution, too, by allowing and encouraging hunting on private land in areas where populations are seen as too high.*

Waterfowl

Missouri is an important state for waterfowl, and great progress has been made in reclaiming needed habitat for them. MDC holdings of large wetlands have grown in number from five to fifteen over the last thirty years, and they are much better distributed along the major rivers and flyways. Besides MDC lands, both the Fish and Wildlife Service and Corps of Engineers have added dramatically to the pool of public wetlands.

Waterfowl hunting is very popular and economically significant to many Missouri communities. Waterfowl hunters have long been crucial to the future of the conservation movement, evidenced by their role early in the 20th century to control market hunting and stem abuses to land and river habitats.

Since most waterfowl are interstate and international travelers, waterfowl regulation falls within a federal framework that is periodically reviewed. The present framework was set in 2001, when states were given 3 options and had to choose one that would stay in place for 5 years. In 2006, a new look will be taken at seasons, limits, zone boundaries, etc., and the public will have another opportunity to make suggestions.

What MDC Heard . . .

MDC Areas

- Why didn't MDC finish work at Duck Creek CA before starting work at Fountain Grove CA. As it is, two of Missouri's waterfowl areas are off-line the same year, significantly reducing hunter options. (SL)
- Preparing blinds is a lot of work, and hunters should be able to drive down the levee roads to drop off gear. (SL)
- There are rumors that the waterfowl reservation system for next year will change. MDC should continue its system that provides advance registration for half the blinds. Eliminating that would discriminate against people who don't live in the area, and probably reduce economic impacts important to rural communities. (SL)
- At Otter Slough and Eagle Bluffs, everyone gets to participate in the draw (not just one hunter per group), and I'd like to see more of that. (SL)

Regulations

- The light goose order was put in place to control a problem of overpopulation up north on the tundra. Managers want more of these geese taken, and I'd like to see the refuges near St. Louis opened earlier to harvest snow geese. It won't disturb ducks to do this: when I hunt snow geese, the ducks regularly fly right by us. (SL)
- Last year I asked about out-of-state hunters participating in our light goose season – cheap for them to come here, costly for me to go there. Did anything change? (SL)
- GET RID OF THIS "PRE-SEASON" HUNT IN AN EFFORT TO KILL "RESIDENT" GEESE. PUT THE 2 WEEKS ON THE END OF THE SEASON WHEN THE GEESE GET DOWN TO THE SOUTH ZONE, WHICH IS IN FEBRUARY. HAS ANYBODY NOTICED THE CLIMATE IS CHANGING? THANKS. (WRITTEN-SL)
- I congratulate the Department on everything they do right. Can you petition the US Fish & Wildlife Service to open Swan Lake to duck hunters? It's not used by geese any more, but there are many ducks up there. USFWS has always listened to MDC's recommendations. (SL)
- Can we set duck seasons to start a little later? Does the Department ever consider setting a lower limit than federal framework allows? Arkansas sets a one hen limit when the framework allows two. (SE)
- START A "PREFERENCE POINT" SYSTEM FOR WATERFOWL AND MANAGED HUNT RESERVATIONS. (WRITTEN-SE)

Places to Hunt

- Design for Conservation said we would get five new areas to duck hunt and you have fulfilled this. The future of duck hunting depends on public lands and facilities. Only 4% of duck hunters own land to hunt on and at best the state areas offer 393 blinds. With Duck Creek and Fountain Grove down, the state loses 23% of its capacity, and St. Louis loses 35% of what we can reasonably drive to – about 141 sites. I haven't had a blind reservation in three years and doubt if I will this year. Please look at ways to add more blinds, for example on the units of Big Muddy NWR; 4 blinds on the edges of Columbia Bottom; buy full rights to some WRP lands that, though small, could provide one or two blinds. It looks like the St. John's Bayou project may get cancelled. If it does, look for a way to buy all that acreage to add one more major wetland area. (SL)
- I bought a small acreage to hunt on, but it is costly. Taxes alone are intimidating. Lots of things have run up the price of this land, including MDC acquisitions. I recommend that others buy their own land to hunt on rather than rely on the limited public areas. (SL)
- How is the Golden Anniversary Wetlands renovation program going? Is it well supported by the nearby communities? (KC)
- There is concern that hunting opponents are applying for special hunts and facilities reservations primarily to deny their use to others. ON DRAWING FOR HUNTING AREAS, MAKE APPLICANTS SHOW A VALID HUNTING PERMIT PLUS A TAG, MIGRATORY BIRD PERMIT OR HUNTER ED CERTIFICATION. (WRITTEN-SL)

Miscellaneous

- What is MDC's stand on motion-wing decoys (MWD)? They have drastically changed the sport in the last five years. Many users are inexperienced but exposure to these decoys really educates the birds fast. This is a reason that other states have outlawed MWDs. Can MDC close some areas to use of MWDs, so those hunters who don't use them will have a chance? I don't use them myself and it's not a cost factor, it's the principle. (SL)
- I am concerned about articles in the *Missouri Conservationist* and on the website that provide information about oiling eggs and disturbing goose nests. I fear that people who aren't certified will begin to destroy nests and oil eggs. I want to hunt those geese, and feel that the web information encourages people to act without getting the proper permit. (SL)

What MDC Said . . .

- *There is evidence that motion-wing decoys increase hunter success rates, but none that they affect populations. Thus their use is not a science-based management decision, but a personal or ethical issue for hunters. When considered 5-7 years ago, there was no consensus to prohibit, and different states in the flyway have taken varied approaches. It would be possible to designate some areas as MWD-free, and we will consider that option.*
- *MDC will look at ideas for increasing duck hunting opportunity, but cannot realistically promise to buy a lot more land. Our budget is limited and does not grow much when you adjust for inflation. We have to give first priority to taking care of and developing what we have, and probably won't buy a lot more. We have pursued WRP purchases where possible, including a big one in the Bootheel last year. We work with partners to develop more use facilities. However, such opportunities are limited.*

MDC Areas

- *Duck Creek CA is a priority for renovation and planning is well under way. It is one of MDC's older areas and will take time and considerable funding to renovate. Current work is a temporary repair that won't solve long-term problems. However, there will be at least 10 hunting blinds/sites there this fall, more if there is enough water.*
- *Fountain Grove is another area with problems due to aging infrastructure. Work has begun on phase 1 of a long-term rehabilitation plan. Phase 2 will come next year if MDC and partners can find enough funding. There will be some hunting at the newer east side wetlands this fall.*

- *A temporary reduction of service at wetlands being renovated is the price for a brighter future. It does not make sense to delay improvements that are needed, designed, and funded just to maintain the lesser services this season.*
- *Some years Coon Island CA has good crops, but not when flooding comes at the wrong time. We put crops in whenever we can.*
- *It is a surprise to hear about the problem at Otter Slough CA, because it continues to report one of the highest hunter success rates among MDC's areas.*
- *The Conservation Commission supports the Golden Anniversary Wetlands program, recognizing that it will take significant time and dollars to complete. If funding stays consistent, we will likely see a couple of areas completed in six years, perhaps all of them in ten. It has been clear from the start of the Hoskins administration that maintenance of aging infrastructure is a major need. Communities near our areas typically understand the value of waterfowl hunting to the local economy, and welcome renovations. However, the dollars come from MDC's regular budget sources and from partners.*

Regulations

- *No changes were made to out-of-state permit prices in the last year, but we will be looking at permit prices in the next year. There are pressures in both directions on pricing for out-of-state permits. Resident hunters don't like the added competition for good sites, but many Missourians with family that moved out of state want them to come back to hunt. When we have over-populations (e.g. light geese generally and deer in some areas), it helps meet management goals to attract hunters from elsewhere.*
- *Migratory bird rules are set in a tiered process that starts with a federal framework for state regulations. The federal framework will be reassessed in 2006, and will consider the biological issues associated with the long-term good of the flocks. States will then work within that framework to define zones and season dates. MDC works with the Flyway Council in setting the framework, but will get the result to work with next spring. We will then have meetings to discuss our options with hunters.*
- *Last year we modified seasons within the old framework to delay them by a few days (responding to a general view of hunters that the season is a bit early) and we will do that again this year. We can be more restrictive than law allows. We consider the biological issues, such as bag limit for hens, to be covered by options in the federal framework and normally choose to give hunters the full range of options allowed.*
- *The zone line in southeast Missouri is one of our toughest calls, due to different hunting situations. While most people would like the Southeast zone line to run down highway 34, there is a 4 week difference between north and south ends of the resulting zone about the date people want the season to start. The zone line is hard to follow because we have tried to put most areas closest to the start dates local hunters say they want.*

Furbearers & Trapping

The Missouri Constitution charges the Department with "control, management, restoration, conservation and regulation of the bird, fish, game, forestry and all wildlife resources of the state." Success in restoration and conservation often brings the need for control. All Missourians are permitted, within the Wildlife Code, to take animals that are causing actual damage to their property.

Hunting and regulated trapping are important tools for control of furbearing animals -- raccoons, beavers, otters, skunks, coyotes, etc. These animals typically produce multiple offspring every year, and can cause problems when allowed to overpopulate. High population density increases the risks from diseases that can quickly harm wildlife populations. Other diseases (e.g. rabies) can have important implications for the health of humans and domesticated animals.

Regulated trapping is an option many enjoy, and it certainly brings trappers into close familiarity with the needs and ways of their quarry. Trapping seasons provide for controlled harvest of animals without threatening populations. They are set at times when animal pelts are in good condition to be used rather than discarded, and when the taking is least likely to jeopardize the young.

What MDC Heard . . .

- My son, who comes from out-of-state to hunt, has been told at Wal-mart to buy both a furbearer permit and a small game permit to hunt coyotes. The MDC office had it mixed up at first, too. Shouldn't it be easier to take coyotes, and allow out-of-state hunters to take them on a small game permit like resident's can? (OZ)
- What are we to do about armadillos? They are a big problem in the Ozarks. The magazine and other publications describe the Wildlife Code as "permissive:" if something is not explicitly permitted, then it is not allowed. Exceptions for feral hogs have received a lot of publicity, but not armadillos. I stopped my son from killing armadillos because the code does not say that is permitted. (OZ)
- Habitat in northeast Missouri supported good populations of pheasants until the fur market crashed and predators became more common. Iowa has an earlier trapping season, and NE Missouri needs that. We also need to be able to use the dry-land 160 conibear trap in order to target the skunks, possums & feral cats that prey on game-bird nests. (NE)
- Move the trapping season to Nov. 1 in order to control population – here in north Missouri things freeze up earlier, and trapping in December becomes impractical. There will be concerns about pelt quality, but ability to use fur is not the only goal. A recreational trapping season can help control problems and should be considered. (NE)
- Other states have spent a lot to control outbreaks of diseases like rabies. Failure to control populations of small furbearers may lead to huge costs for Missouri and MDC. More trapping now will reduce the likelihood of those problems and the cost of needed remedies. (NE)
- Thanks to John Smith and Dave Hamilton for their presentations to the Missouri Trappers Association. It has been good to have that kind of support and information from MDC. (SE)
- I own small ranch in Ripley County, and have a huge problem with coyotes. Is it possible to reinstate bounties on coyotes? (SE)
- Would it be proper for trapper to sell a coyote to a fox pen? (SE)
- You need to publish a book to encourage trapping otters. They cleaned out my ponds, took crayfish out of the branch, and the channel catfish are almost gone from the rivers. (SW)
- Thank you for a good job – you must be doing better because Debo McKinney has not been in our office complaining about otters for two years! (OZ)
- I commend Director Hoskins for standing up and "taking the heat" at a forum like this. All in all, the Department does a great job. One thing I want to ask is about the big cat tracks I see when I trap. They are bigger than a bobcat, and I can recall the days when MDC said there weren't bobcats here, either. What are these tracks? (NW)

What MDC Said . . .

- *The permits involved in coyote hunting are: Resident Small Game Hunting (\$10); Resident Trapping (\$10); Non-Resident Furbearer Hunting & Trapping (\$80); and Non-Resident Small Game Hunting (\$65). Resident hunters can shoot coyotes with the small game permit. Non-resident coyote hunters need only the nonresident furbearers hunting and trapping permit and do not need the small game permit to take coyotes. We regret the mistakes, but this is a confusing issue. If our staff finds it confusing, it must be doubly so for the staff of the many permit vendors. When there is a question, a phone call to our offices should clear it up. We will consider the idea of letting out-of-state hunters take coyotes on the non-resident small game hunting permit, because we do want to encourage taking those animals in problem areas.*
- *Armadillos are naturally expanding their range into Missouri and are among several species that can do significant property damage. When they damage a landowner's property, they can be shot or otherwise taken. They are not mentioned in the Wildlife Code, and a change may be in order to clarify when and how armadillos can be taken.*
- *Recreational trapping is not a popular idea in all parts of Missouri, and extending present regulations in that direction could produce a backlash that threatens our ability to use this important management tool. Trapping has been taken away in other states using the initiative process. Most of the public is not aware of and does not understand the problems that come with overpopulation of furbearers, their impact on people's livelihoods and their effects on other wildlife.*
- *The Conservation Commission never employed bounties on coyotes, but some counties did. MDC always found that bounties did not result in effective control. We have succeeded in controlling coyotes through trapping, although that depends on prices. There are methods available today like cable restraint traps that weren't available a few years ago. We recommend that landowners experiencing coyote problems should try trapping, and our staff will be glad to help you find someone with trapping skills who will help.*
- *The Wildlife Code does authorize a process for trappers to sell coyotes to properly licensed running pens.*
- *Otters have been a tough issue for MDC. Twenty years ago, surveys told us people would like to see otters brought back, and the biological data we had -- which we now know to be insufficient -- made us to think there would be few problems. We now know that otters reproduce better than expected, and have documented fishery damage in some ponds and headwaters streams. We responded by liberalizing the trapping season and helping direct trappers to problem areas. This has had considerable success, in part thanks to high fur prices on world markets. On larger streams, we are not convinced that otters have significant impacts, but we are seriously investigating to learn what their role is. Our staff will visit with you to compare notes about the Sac, Osage and Marmaton fishing.*
- *You could be seeing mountain lion tracks. We have documented some mountain lions living in the wild in Missouri in recent years, but don't know how many or have any evidence that they are reproducing here. Some are illegally released captive animals. MDC is **not** stocking or doing anything else to encourage mountain lions. We do know they can move a long way, evidenced by an Oklahoma road kill of a lion released in North Dakota.*

Fishing

Fishing is popular with most Missourians, an easy pastime that connects people with nature and offers relief from hectic lifestyles. Lots of young people get hooked on nature when they first hook a fish! With several major reservoirs, thousands of miles of streams, and tens of thousands of small lakes and ponds, Missourians can usually find fishing opportunities pretty close to home.

MDC works in many ways to support our fisheries, including boat access points on major lakes and streams, fishery management for many public and urban lakes, stocking public waters with some species, assistance to private pond owners, kids fishing programs, and project Stream Team, to name only a few.

What MDC Heard . . .

- I am a property owner and Stream Team member on the Big Niangua River, and have noticed a decline in the fishery – numbers, size & quality. Do MDC creel surveys confirm that? (CE)
- MDC's fisheries program is good -- special compliments for the pond stocking program. (NE)
- Wildlife Code Changes prohibiting commercial catfish harvest have pretty well eliminated commercial fishermen on the Missouri River. Illinois allows it, so Missouri loses permits and production to them – I moved to Illinois because of the rules. The result is big catfish, but I predict you will have, under this rule, an overpopulation of big blue catfish, followed by a collapse in population. (SL)
- I SUPPORT THE BAN ON COMMERCIAL FISHING FOR CATFISH ON THE MISSOURI RIVER. FISHING IS MUCH IMPROVED SINCE THE BAN. I WOULD LIKE TO SEE COMMERCIAL FISHING FOR PADDLEFISH BANNED ON THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER IN ILLINOIS AND MISSOURI. (WRITTEN-SL)
- I have visitors from out-of-state who like to fish. They now choose between a 1-day permit and a 1-year permit. Could there be something in between for those who stay a week or two? (OZ)
- Last year there were meetings about bass tournaments and the need for special “release boats” and procedures for releasing tournament catch after judging. Where is the Department on acquiring such boats? Has that group met again? Meetings talked about survival rates. (KC)
- What are you learning about noodling? Do you have enough data to say if it is damaging to the fishery? (NW)
- MDC calls it the “hand fishing experiment.” Noodlers Anonymous proposed statewide 5-fish/year limit, but MDC only authorized handfishing for a 45-day season on a total of about 120 miles of streams. Of 100 permits sold, 70 people reported catching only 9 flatheads and 6 channel catfish. Studies in other states show that handfishing does not damage populations. When I visited with researchers from other states, they say the first question ask is “how many fish did other anglers catch.” MDC is not tracking that. (NW)
- Fishing in the Grand River is declining where I live, and I would like you to do further studies of this and do something to stop the decline. (NW)
- Have there been studies about what jet boats are doing to fish beds? My impression is that there are fewer and fewer fish today. Does MDC replenish fish stocks? (SE)
- Have otters impacted Missouri's stream fisheries? (CE)
- Are river otters harmful to fish populations? (SE)
- I fish on Table Rock Lake and wonder why you don't stock fish there – your magazine frequently talks about stocking other lakes, but not Table Rock. (SW)
- I fish a lot and always have, but there are no fish left in the Sac River. Stockton Dam made some changes, but we still caught fish until MDC restocked otters. They finished off the fish in the Sac, cleaned out my ponds, and took the crayfish out of the branches. Channel cats almost gone. Up on the Osage and Marmaton, newspaper reports say your shocking crew looked for big fish but found none. Giggers I know are not finding suckers. MDC is working on a new catfish plan, but you are just kidding yourselves because of the otters. The big catfish aren't there anymore. (SW)
- Ditto on concern about otters: I have fished the Spring River for years, but haven't seen fish the last 3 or 4 years and think the otters are behind it. (SW)

What MDC Said . . .

- *Fishing will fluctuate on most streams, so look at long-term trends. There are many natural reasons for poor recruitment years (e.g. floods at wrong time for spawning), and the creel will reflect them some years later. MDC does some electro-fishing on the Niangua and may have creel counts, too. We appreciate your observation, and will check to see what data we have.*
- *MDC used to have a 5-day fishing permit before revising the line-up with the 1-day /1-year choice (\$5.50 versus \$12/\$35 resident/non-resident). When someone buys enough multiple days (3 resident/7 nonresident), they are issued the annual permit.*
- *After some study of the tournament lakes, we determined that there were enough release boats available from the private sector, and that they were aware of and using appropriate release procedures. That group has not met again. Tournament survival issues are a significant concern, and an interstate study is now being completed. When that data is compiled, there may be other meetings to follow up on results.*
- *Research on hand fishing and other topics is multi-year in nature, and we have been mainly gathering baseline data this year. We have gathered some data but can draw no conclusions yet. The handfishing season is experimental, part of an effort to better understand who is taking what. Much of the information we got this year is more sociological than biological, but over the next five years we should learn a great deal. We do know that many permittees this year failed to turn in any data on their harvest. Keep in mind that "noodling" was prohibited by law by the Missouri Senate years before MDC was ever created. Many Missourians have complained vigorously about MDC's allowing this experimental season. We are doing it to separate biological fact from intuition.*
- *The Grand River is part of an extensive catfish study now under way, and we will be looking carefully at that fishery. We do not have recent information on all of the river, but what we do have says that the fishery as a whole is fine. The recent drought did result in decline in some of the upper reaches, and that may be what you are observing.*
- *MDC does stock some fish, notably trout and walleye, but as a rule we try to manage fisheries at self-sustaining level. Stocking is important in heavily used community lakes and important for species that do not reproduce well in the wild, trout being the best example.*
- *Except for special species like walleye, MDC doesn't normally stock any of the larger lakes. Instead, MDC works with lake owners to improve habitat to encourage natural fish reproduction. Table Rock is a maturing lake with its fishery and habitat structure changing from the days when it was new.*
- *We have learned the hard way that otters reproduce better than expected. They can severely damage the fishery in a pond of small headwaters stream. On larger streams, we have not seen convincing data that otters pose a significant problem, but we are seriously investigating the problem. A variety of things can degrade a fishery, and we want to identify and fix whatever the root problems are -- and appreciate the opportunity to compare our notes to yours. Trapping is the best tool available to control otters, and has had considerable success in areas with identified problems.*

Law Enforcement

The Wildlife Code is Missouri's tool for regulating fish and wildlife. It is only as effective as it is known and followed by the people. The real front line of Wildlife Code enforcement is the outdoorswomen and outdoorsmen of this state. They know that an Agent cannot be everywhere, and understand that citizen tips start most enforcement actions. They ultimately give the Code its credibility by setting the standards and teaching the youngsters what is appropriate.

Enforcing wildlife laws is the primary job of MDC's Conservation Agents. Catching poachers is no small job and it is no less important today than in the past. Conservation Agents from the first days of MDC have resided in, and been assigned to, one county. Every county has at least one agent, and part of that agent's job is to become part of the community and to help people understand the code.

Law enforcement in the modern world is increasingly demanding. Agents receive six months of special training before they can start to work. Conservation Agents are more than "game wardens," fulfilling important roles as educator, trainer and community liaison. Agents routinely call on other MDC staff with more specialized training to help when needed.

In spite of the State's restricted budget in recent years, the Conservation Commission has consistently held the line on numbers of Agents, maintaining a full contingent and not moving agent positions to meet other pressing needs. There have probably never been as many agents as conservationists would like, but somehow this dedicated crew stays effective and gets the most important work done.

What MDC Heard . . .

- I spend 2-3 days/month fishing on the Gasconade, Big Piney and North Fork Rivers, but see little law enforcement. I don't remember seeing one agent in the last 15 years. What I do see is kids coming out with an illegal stringer of bass; messy access areas; and unsafe situations due to meth cooking. (OZ)
- You need more agents – I have deer poaching in my front yard. Raise the cost of my permit by \$2 or \$3 if you need to, but get some more enforcement out here! (OZ)
- Is information about who gets ticketed under the Wildlife Code a public record? Where can I go to see it? (OZ)
- What is the Department doing about deer & turkey poaching now? In Pennsylvania, they have 2 agents per county plus volunteer deputies. They seize vehicles and firearms from violators. How about stiffer penalties here? (CE)
- I'm concerned about poaching problems which are severe on my land. Missouri has soft poaching laws and should stiffen them. Follow the example of some states to seize the guns of poachers. Or set up a restitution scale people can use to pursue civil suits against those who poached on their land, maybe \$300 for trespassing to take a doe or \$10,000 for a Boone & Crockett class buck. (SL)
- Of eleven MDC staff present tonight, only one is an agent. Can we get more agents to help with the crowds who show up for deer hunting? Can you supplement agents in the fall with part-time help like retirees, off-duty deputies, etc.? (NE)

What MDC Said . . .

- *When MDC began its program to build stream accesses, no one imagined some problems like methamphetamine labs. MDC and other agencies work closely with the Sheriff's Departments to deal with such problems on Department areas, but especially in counties like this one (Texas County) the combined pool of personnel is too small to cover all the problems we would like. We depend heavily on citizens to let us know when they see problems – otherwise the trail may grow cold before anyone in authority can get there.*

- *Call us -- local office or the Operation Game Thief hotline 1-800-392-1111 -- on any poaching activity. We will investigate. We can set up deer decoys, and do so only at sites people have told us that there are poaching problems.*
- *Information about tickets issued is public record. Agents provide information to county prosecutors who control its release until the court rules. In some counties it gets published in the papers, but that depends on the paper choosing to publish it and collecting the information from the prosecutors. We believe it is helpful to publicize tickets, because for many people the adverse publicity is a bigger deterrent than the fines involved. In summer, most tickets are on rivers, in fall most are for poachers.*
- *Penalties for poaching and other wildlife violations are set by the legislature and imposed by the courts. The legislature says code violations are a class A misdemeanor (maximum penalty is \$1000 or one year in jail), and courts rarely impose the maximum.*
- *Agents work on poaching problems, and the Department is committed to help landowners and outdoors-people deal with enforcement issues. We also work hard to educate about poaching. MDC cannot – under state laws – put volunteers out into law enforcement situations without extensive training. Agents do have ride-along helpers in some areas, but they help primarily with education programs.*
- *Missouri does not have a confiscation law for wildlife violations. We do revoke permits, however, and that is having some success. It extends via reciprocal agreements to revoke permit possibilities in 22 other states.*

Outreach & Education

MDC's commitment to public outreach and education began in the first year of the Conservation Commission, back in 1937. *The Missouri Conservationist* magazine circulates to almost one-half million addresses monthly. Newspaper, TV, radio and the internet are all important tools of public communication at both state and local levels.

Education is critical to conservation today, especially important where kids grow up without much daily contact with the natural world. MDC dedicates a corps of Conservation Education Consultants and Outdoor Skills Specialists to work full-time with schools and teachers across the state. It develops and supplies high quality materials explaining Missouri's forest, fish and wildlife resources. Consultants periodically visit every school, making sure teachers understand all that is available to help provide the next generation with tools and opportunities to better understand the outdoors.

An important component of outdoor education is the Hunter Education Certification course required of all hunters born on or after January 1, 1967. The course is part of a broader outdoor skills education effort. MDC provides many opportunities for people to learn to enjoy the outdoors through facilities such as shooting range and outdoor education centers and nature centers, as well as through programs such as Missouri's Outdoor Women, First Hunts and Urban Fishing Clinics. MDC also works with many other organizations to build a cooperative system of outdoor education partnerships.

What MDC Heard . . .

Magazine

- I like *The Missouri Conservationist* magazine. I also want to encourage you to do more for non-game and endangered species. (SL)
- Thank you for fulfilling last year's promise to get the forum schedule into *The Missouri Conservationist* magazine. (KC)
- I like *The Missouri Conservationist* magazine, especially the photos. I wish they would not cut the tails off of birds in photographs as they frequently do. (OZ)
- My wife and I appreciate your magazine, *The Missouri Conservationist*. (SE)

Website

- The redesigned website is better, but still has some problems and a lot of outdated information. Some of the information on pool levels is from 1993. (SL)
- An article in *The Missouri Conservationist* about hellbenders said to go to the MDC website to volunteer to help hellbenders. I looked there but couldn't find where to volunteer. (CE)

Educating Youth

- I have heard some good things tonight, but want to emphasize the need to get the urban kids in St. Louis and Kansas City involved with the outdoors and conservation activities. (SL)
- I am part of an aircraft association that not long ago set a national goal of getting 1 million kids into the air in small planes – and surprisingly we are most of the way there. MDC should set a goal like 100,000 kids into woods and track it. I think you'd get good support and create a sense of progress where there is frustration now. (SL)
- Do you have any training programs for future conservationists? (SE)

Miscellaneous

- Will education programs at the Presley Center in Shannon County continue? They are very good and appreciated by teachers. (CE)
- I volunteer at the Henges Shooting Range, and want to help answer the question of how to get kids involved: bring them to clinics listed on Conservation Connections. There are a lot of them, and participants really seem to enjoy and learn from them. (SL)
- I grew up on a century farm in Lawrence County, volunteer as a naturalist at the Springfield Nature Center, and work for Bass Pro greeting 4000 customers a week. I encourage you to create a program targeting the many newcomers to Missouri to help them see how to better protect land, soil and water. We have lots of nice folks moving into the area, yet many who prize the natural resources don't know much. Chain link fencing for chickens, yards mowed to city standards, clueless about invasive species, pesticide and herbicide abuse – lots happens with good intentions by people who just don't know. Help them. (SW)
- Educating newcomers is not just about people moving in from out-of-state places that are different from Missouri, but also about retirees from urban Missouri. It will take a special effort to help them learn how to do things to protect the parts of nature that attracted them here in the first place. (SW)

What MDC Said . . .

- *MDC programs for educators will continue, although not necessarily at the Presley Center. We are wrestling with the question of how to improve that Center at a reasonable cost. It is an aging facility, and does not provide some of the accessibility and safety options that some visitors need, and that the law requires of public facilities.*
- *We recently started a youth conservation corps at the high school level, giving young people an opportunity to work on real projects and develop skills that lead to a conservation career. We offer some summer internships for college students to do other projects. We are doing all we can to encourage interest in forest, fish and wildlife resource disciplines. Colleges are not getting the number of people in those programs that will be needed by agencies like MDC in the future.*
- *We have a challenge to help educate people about conservation, and we work with many "imported" landowners on resource-related problems. It is a bigger problem than MDC can handle alone, however. Everyone from University Extension to local businesses can do a lot to help people learn and understand.*

Access for People With Disabilities

Many Missourians with disabilities want to enjoy conservation recreation. MDC works to provide access to Department areas, and complies with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in this regard. All new construction is ADA compliant, and many facilities have been retrofitted to provide better access. The Department has for over a decade had an aggressive program of developing disabled accessible fishing facilities on both MDC and Community Assistance Program sites.

Of course much remains to be done and priorities have to be set. To help with this, MDC established a Disabled Accessibility Advisory Council several years ago. It recommends ways to improve access, and helps achieve the Department's intention to provide outdoor recreation opportunities.

What MDC Heard . . .

- Would MDC issue permits for ATV use by hunters with disabilities so they can move harvested deer out of woods? (SE)
- I am "mobility impaired" but not wheelchair bound – osteomyelitis left me with a fused knee and ankle, and I must use crutches or cane all the time. I cannot drag, load or field dress a deer. (1) I'd like to see special deer hunts specifically for mobility impaired. (2) People can apply for only one managed hunt per year, and that includes the hunt at Mark Twain Lake on Corps land. That policy forces me choose between applying for that deer hunt, and some other managed hunt closer to home – which I can do with the help of friends. Rules allow a wheelchair-bound person to participate in more than one hunt, and I'd like to see that allowed for a larger group of mobility impairments. (3) The "wheelchair-bound" criteria used to qualify for special deer hunts could be modified along the lines of the language in waterfowl blind policies (. . . unable to move from place to place without the use of a wheelchair, walker, prosthesis, forearm crutches or comparable mobility related device . . .) to increase opportunity. (KC - oral & written)
- Blind-building and repair is physically demanding. With rising age of hunters, could you create a vehicle permit system to allow waterfowl hunters to get on MDC levees (to bring in supplies) two weeks prior to inspection? Illinois has done it successfully. (SL)
- Would you consider a special 2-day turkey season and 2-day deer season for handicapped hunters, similar to the youth season? (OZ)
- How about having a season for disabled hunters on the same weekends as the youth seasons, both spring and fall. Make the youth turkey season into an all-day event instead of a half-day. (SW)

What MDC Said . . .

- *MDC does issue special use permits to people with disabilities or special needs, but they are pretty specific – particular person, certain days and from certain locations. We do not give blanket permission for ATV use by people with disability. Limiting ATVs to roads keeps "unofficial" trails from starting – and the erosion and stream siltation that can result. Moreover, ATVs can disrupt the opportunities for other users, including hunters.*
- *In many cases our ability to provide programs depends on infrastructure improvements and partners ready to assist. Those have been key elements in the managed hunt at Mark Twain Lake. We have used "wheelchair-bound" as one of the participation criteria since the beginning, but our Regulations Committee will take a look at your suggestion for more inclusive language there.*
- *We want to do what we can to accommodate young hunters and people with disabilities who want to hunt, and will look at the several proposals we've heard for doing more.*

Non-Game Wildlife

The Conservation Commission was created with a much broader mandate than in many states. Department responsibilities were defined in 1936 to include forestry and non-game wildlife along with the more common "fish and game" responsibility. In 1976, voters initiated and approved a plan called "Design for Conservation" which increased emphasis and funding for programs to conserve plants and animals that are not hunted or fished.

Federal laws and programs provide the state with many opportunities and responsibilities. MDC provides critical state leadership to comply with the Endangered Species Act, and to constructively apply funds federally directed to benefit non-game wildlife and all endangered species.

What MDC Heard . . .

- I am concerned about turtle racing, which I think is hurting populations. I am aware of at least 42 races in Missouri, involving an average of 50 turtles each. Over ten years, these alone will affect some 21,000 turtles. Existing regulations in the Wildlife Code are not being enforced, including confinement standards (cage size, air holes, adequate food & water, maximum number) and a limit of five in possession. Filthy conditions I've witnessed are unhealthy and cruel. Released turtles could spread disease to wild populations, and will suffer increased mortality if not released in the areas they were captured. Could we get on a Conservation Commission agenda to talk turtles? (SE)
- I have heard about some federal program to eliminate all exotic species in Missouri, and am worried what that means for species like pheasants and others we like. Can you tell us more what is being proposed? (SE)
- Can you talk about the hellbenders? (CE)
- You need more wooly worm experts! I saw thousands on the move across a road near Linn Creek, and wonder what they are doing. (CE)
- One of the benefits of the (1/8th of 1 percent) sales tax was the improved study of Natural History. I speak to encourage continuing the effort, keeping staff like botanists, ecologists, and ornithologists in place. Citizens benefit from the resulting publications, which makes them think more about conservation. (SL)

What MDC Said . . .

- *Thank you for a well expressed concern and well researched information about turtle racing. We echo the audience's applause for what you say. Ken West, our Regional Protection Division Supervisor, will visit with you to pursue proper enforcement action, and direct you to other opportunities for input to regulations decisions.*
- *We are not aware of any push to eliminate all exotic species – indeed this Department encourages some exotic wildlife like pheasants and trout. Every agency understands the importance of exotics like cattle, sheep, wheat and soybeans. There is a renewed federal and state commitment to control exotic invasive or nuisance species – e.g. silver carp, zebra mussel, kudzu, purple loosestrife. Invasives often are problems to more than our fish and wildlife – often threatening agriculture or utilities for example. Control is so difficult that everyone has to work together to deal with the ones causing the most problems for the most people.*
- *Two hellbender species (Eastern and Ozark) are found in Missouri. They are declining in numbers, listed as endangered in the Wildlife Code, and being considered for listing by the federal government. We find very few young hellbenders. They are amphibians that breath and absorb nutrients through their skin. This makes them very susceptible to pollution, habitat change and degraded water quality, so they function in many ways like the old canary-in-coal mine. We are tracking their status carefully, trying to understand their problems. We work with partners to maintain their habitats and learn how to propagate them in captivity – in case the decline in nature cannot be reversed.*
- *MDC has continued to work on natural history research and staffing. More than 20% of this year's Resource Science Division budget is for natural history related scientific research and surveys, and we*

partner with others to conduct research, including academic institutions such as the University of Missouri-Columbia, University of Missouri-St. Louis, and the Missouri Botanical Gardens.

Camping, Riding, Hiking & Other Recreation

Department areas are in demand for a wide variety of outdoor recreations. Hunting and fishing are primary uses of most areas, and such use continues to be high. Camping, horse-riding, hiking, and bird-watching are also popular recreations. In recent years, facilities and permission for a growing list of public uses have been requested.

This section compiles comments on uses other than hunting and fishing. Note that requests for facilities on specific Conservation Areas are included in the region where the area is located.

What MDC Heard . . .

Camping

- We appreciate the fishing, boating, and swimming in Missouri, having lived in several other states where things were not so well off. One reason we voted for the 1/8% conservation tax was because we thought it would develop good campgrounds. We then found out MDC doesn't provide developed camping, and want to know what can be done to improve camping facilities – some campsites in Missouri are not top-notch. (SE)
- Missouri River Communities Network would like to see the special river-approach camping rules that were put in place during the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial made permanent. There also needs to be increased partnership between MDC and DNR-Parks to provide more public camping opportunities in the Missouri River valley, especially along the Katy Trail. (CE)
- The Department needs to do more to mark public areas where special hunts are going on. I've been turkey hunting and seen an unknowing hiker coming up the trail, wearing all the colors that turkey hunters know not to wear in the woods. (SL)
- Camping under the stars is my gig, and it is hard to get away from bright lights anywhere. Not long ago, we were disturbed by the many promotional search light beams, used by places like McDonalds to attract customers. Good conservationists should work to end this sort of energy over-use, also known as "light pollution." (SW)
- WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT TRASH ON DEPARTMENT AREAS, AND AREAS BEING CLOSED TO CAMPING. WE'D LIKE TO SEE A NEW PROGRAM IN WHICH PEOPLE COULD APPLY TO DO VOLUNTARY CLEAN-UP WORK, AND IN EXCHANGE BE GIVEN PERMISSION TO CAMP. ALTERNATIVELY, THE DEPARTMENT COULD IDENTIFY AREAS NEEDING CLEAN-UP, THEN ALLOW PEOPLE TO CAMP THERE IF THEY WILL DO SPECIFIED CLEAN-UP CHORES. (SW -- WRITTEN)

Horse Use

- Is MDC still considering opening to horses the parts of the Ozark Trail crossing conservation areas? (SW)
- Horse trails can do a lot of damage to MDC areas and to quail habitat. (KC)
- I have been working with the Army Corps of Engineers at Pomme de Terre Lake to open some new trails. It is troubling to report they are more accommodating and easier to get along with than MDC. There needs to be a different attitude from your staff toward horse trails. (SW)

What MDC Said . . .

- *Historically, MDC has not built developed campgrounds but has authorized primitive camping on many areas and designated areas with limited facilities on others. The Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages state parks, and they do a good job providing developed campsites. Missouri voters approved both the 1/8% Conservation sales tax to support MDC and a 1/10% Parks and Soils Tax that enables DNR to keep State Parks in top shape. Several federal agencies (Forest Service, Corps, Park Service) also provide and manage campgrounds, and some of those facilities have declined in recent years*

because of federal budget reallocations. MDC would like to offer more camping opportunities on conservation areas, especially those near population centers, and is looking for funds and partners to help do so.

- *The decision has been made by the Conservation Commission not to allow horses on the Ozark Trail. In every case where the trail enters/leaves a CA, an adjoining landowner – public or private – does not allow horses. The trail was conceived, designed and routed for foot traffic, and developers generally secured permission from landowners for foot traffic only. MDC continues to work with riding groups to provide alternatives. For example, at Peck Ranch CA, there is a private tract between the highway and our boundary. If trail groups can secure access across that private land, we stand ready to build an alternative trail on Peck Ranch using some interior roads that are now closed. This will not be on the Ozark Trail, but will provide a similar opportunity to cross the area.*

MDC's Job

Missouri voters used the constitution's initiative process in 1936 to create a citizen-led Conservation Commission to oversee "control, management, restoration, conservation and regulation of the bird, fish, game, forestry and all wildlife resources of the state." At that time, fish, forest and wildlife resources were in crisis. Market hunting had decimated many wildlife species, and land use practices had severely altered habitats. Most marketable timber had been harvested and frequent fires significantly changed habitats and erosion rates. Streams and fisheries were damaged by accelerated erosion and increased runoff rates. Areas that were once forests, wetlands or prairies were being converted to other uses, with many negative cumulative effects.

The Conservation Commission worked for decades just to restore healthy populations of deer, turkey and other species; and to control wildfire and get Missouri forest lands, both public and private, back into a productive mode. By the early 1970s, much had been accomplished. Moreover, several important federal laws added significant protections to wildlife, fish, forests, clean water and clean air. The conservation challenge was changing.

In 1976, voters again used the initiative process to expand Department programs and fund them through a one-eighth of one percent sales tax, a program called "Design for Conservation." Much has been accomplished in the thirty years since, and public priorities continue to change. Forums like these, along with surveys and other tools, tell us that Missourians still prize their forest, fish and wildlife resources, and want them cared for properly. MDC is Missouri's tool to see that future generations know the same or better richness of nature than we have today. We can only do that by listening carefully to what people want and by providing the skills, and services they need.

What MDC Heard . . .

- How is MDC involved with emergency management? (SE)
- Has MDC done anything to help with recovery from Hurricane Katrina? (OZ)
- The main problem is that we have too many people! (SW)
- I have seen a lot of change, in Poplar Bluff where I live and across this state as I travel. If we don't do something, there aren't going to be any fish and wildlife left. We have to fight to keep what we have, and to make sure the next generation of kids understand its value. We need to speak out with passion and commitment about what forests, fish and wildlife do for us – not just good hunting or whatever, but making us feel good, relaxing our minds and enriching our lives. (SW)
- What is MDC's role in addressing the important issue of water quality? (SW)
- Define the areas of responsibility of MDC compared to other Missouri Departments that manage land, parks, etc. (SE)
- Missouri is third of all states in funding. How do we rate in programs and usage for all citizens versus other states. (SE)
- Has there ever been a cost analysis on the yellow permits – doesn't the paper alone cost more than the old system? I almost need a five gallon bucket to carry it all. Can't we go back to the old system with smaller permits that fit in your wallet? (SL)
- A recent state audit criticized the Department for about \$1 million spent to buy low-cost give-away items, clothing reimbursements to staff, low rents charged employees for living in houses on certain MDC areas, etc. What is the Department's comment on that audit? (KC)
- I support you in your aircraft decision that has been in the papers. (OZ)
- LET ME KNOW HOW I CAN GET A RIDE FOR ME AND MY GRANDSON ON THE NEW LUXURY JET YOU ARE PURCHASING...I HELP PAY FOR IT, YOU KNOW. DURING THE WEEK, ANY DAY IS OK. THANKS. (WRITTEN-SL)
- The Missouri River Communities Network (MRCN) supports and appreciates MDC's Stream Team, boat ramp and Missouri River land acquisition programs. We encourage more ramps; expanded use of BIG-P (Boating Infrastructure Grant Program) to help communities build fuel/pumpout/marina facilities; and permanency for special river camping rules you put in place during the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial. We

want to continue partnering with MDC on projects like our AmeriCorps project (our volunteers help teach conservation concepts to school kids) and the Missouri River Heritage Tourism Initiative.

What MDC Said . . .

- *MDC helps with emergency situations at an appropriate level, whether that means helping the Sheriff search for a missing person, or helping through the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) on things like the 1993 Flood or Hurricane Katrina. The Governor requires that out-of-state requests for help from state agencies come through SEMA. When Louisiana asked SEMA, after Hurricane Katrina, for people with boats who could do search and rescue work, MDC was able to put agents on the scene very quickly. MDC sent two agents from each region and is on stand-by to go again if requested.*
- *The Department of Natural Resources regulates clean water, clean air, mining, etc., and manages the state's parks. Conservation areas are not parks, and are managed by MDC with minimal development. There are also several federal agencies that manage public land for recreation, notably the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.*
- *The Clean Water Act is administered by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, and our role in water quality protection is advisory. MDC investigates and evaluates fishkills. It also provides input to DNR and other agencies (using their standard-setting processes) about the needs of fish and wildlife.*
- *Population growth is one factor having an impact on all Missouri habitats and wildlife resources.*
- *MDC has worked hard to improve its permits but has not yet found an answer that satisfies everyone. We will keep working on it. Our permit needs are more complex than they once were, and than many states to which we might be compared. Missouri provides a lot of opportunities and options. Permit paper serves an important tagging function, and that is a lot different today than when people could only take one or two deer. A separate waterfowl/migratory bird permit became a federal requirement about the time point-of-sale permits began, another requirement not present in the old days.*
- *People can make the basic permit less bulky by taking the back off the card, sticking the parts together and folding it twice. That fits neatly in most wallets.*
- *MDC has had 27 audits in the last five years, none of which found evidence of misappropriation or misuse of funds. Auditors have criticized some judgments made, and we appreciate that such oversight can help us improve. The audit you mentioned spanned two years. As to the items you mentioned: (1) Give-away items are carefully considered components of volunteer programs like Stream Team, Hunter Education, and Nature Center volunteers. The value of hours donated to the cause far exceeds such promotional costs, but small tokens do help keep participation strong. (2) Some MDC areas were acquired with houses on them, often older buildings. In some cases, it is to MDC's advantage to have an employee reside in those houses. When approved, we charge the employee rent. There is a process for setting rent to fit the situation, and we will reexamine the resulting rates in light of this audit. (3) Clothing allowances: we ask employees in public contact situations to wear special "signature apparel" (embroidered with the Department logo, their name and division) so the public can identify them. Office staff may need only a few shirts, and has an allowance of \$100/year; field employees, who also need the logo on work jackets, vests, etc. receive up to \$300 reimbursement. Some non-signature wear is also required for certain jobs (often for safety reasons) and may also be bought with this allowance (payment for non-signature items is taxable income to the employee). With 1500-1600 full-time employees, clothing costs add up, but we believe it is appropriate to help the public identify our staff. MDC employees, who have seen only one general raise in the past five years, are on the front lines and are our most powerful tool for helping people practice good conservation.*
- *MDC uses partnerships to achieve what we cannot do alone, but partnerships must offer good conservation results. Tourism is not part of MDC's mission, yet we support tourism efforts that produce significant positive results for fish, forest and wildlife or encourage people to use and enjoy MDC areas.*

Regional Sections

One forum was held in each of MDC's eight administrative regions. Some input concerned areas or activities within a specific region and are likely to be addressed by local or regional staff. Comments of this nature are noted under the heading "Regional Sections." Most comments about specific Conservation Areas (CA) are included in the regional section where the CA is located (even if different from the forum region), noting the region where the comment was made if it is different.

Some but not all MDC responses to regional questions are recorded here: many were addressed personally between staff and participants during breaks and after the forum formally concluded.

Input to MDC at the regional level is always open by calling the regional offices. In addition, each region has established a citizen Landowner Advisory Council (LAC) to help the Department communicate better. Some citizens may feel more comfortable expressing concerns or addressing questions to a council member than to staff. MDC staff work to keep council members informed about a wide range of programs and plans, and council members work to learn where to go for answers and help. LAC members in each region who attended the regional forum were introduced there, both to recognize their contribution and to make it easier for others in the region to recognize them. Information about who the LAC members are and how to contact them may be obtained by calling the regional office.

Other input concerned issues raised in multiple regions or were statewide in scope. These were removed from the regional pages and gathered in Statewide Issue sections of this summary. All comments and questions are important and neither the section in which they are placed nor the order of listing is intended to assign any rank or priority.

Northeast Region

Elementary School Gymnasium

Memphis

September 22, 2005

The meeting convened at 7:00 p.m., called to order by Matt Wolken, Northeast Region Protection Supervisor. He welcomed over 32 participants. He introduced MDC staff and explained meeting plans. After a twenty minute overview of the region's extent, services and programs, Mr. Wolken introduced and turned the meeting over to Director John Hoskins.

Director Hoskins gave brief welcoming [remarks](#) and thanked the audience for attending. Comments and questions related primarily to deer, quail, and other wildlife issues. A short break at 7:45 p.m. allowed time for several conversations and was followed by group discussion of other topics.

Director Hoskins made concluding remarks before adjourning the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

Note: Some comments have been placed in the "Statewide Issues" section rather than included below.

What MDC Heard . . .

Deer Regulations at Conservation Areas (CAs)

- I was surprised that new regulations restrict the numbers/kinds of deer to take on Indian Hills CA and Deer Ridge CA when Scotland and Lewis counties are both overpopulated. When were counts taken that were used as a basis for this decision? What is happening to counts of vehicle collisions in the area?
- In a 10 mile stretch I travel regularly, I saw 60 road-killed deer last year, all but one antlerless. A coworker hit three deer a month ago. I don't believe that there is a shortage of antlerless deer anywhere in this county (Scotland). You need to get better numbers.
- When you decimate deer population on conservation areas, deer move there from other areas that are overpopulated. That helps control deer off of the area.

Land to Hunt

- Lease hunting has taken much of the land out of reach that I used to hunt .

Quail, Pheasants and Other Game-Birds

- Have you thought of releasing pheasants in northeast Missouri, perhaps swapping turkeys to other states for them? This would attract people to come, hunt and spend money to boost the local economy.

What MDC Said . . .

- *Deer regulations on Indian Hills CA were set using deer counts after the end of last year's deer season. Hunters and staff told us that deer numbers were low, and aerial surveys confirmed that. Counts on Indian Hills showed 17 deer per square mile, well below population goals. Deer will likely move onto the CA over time, but that will not likely happen before the next deer season.*
- *MDC areas provide an option for deer hunters who have no other place to hunt. In most cases, this leads to heavy hunting pressure and harvest on Department areas. Especially on larger areas, other deer may not move in for several years, leading to poorer hunting that attracts fewer hunters. We adjust regulations to keep the herd from being overhunted on Department areas. Where a county has too many deer, the*

problem will not be solved by over-harvesting the small part of local land that MDC manages. Any solution must involve moving more hunters from MDC land to hunting places well distributed around the county.

- *Put-and-take hunting for species like pheasants, quail and grouse is often suggested and considered. Is this approach really "conservation?" It is short-term and expensive, so it usually makes more sense to spend the dollars improving habitat.*
- *Staff in northeast Missouri report seeing more pheasants and quail this year. Where habitat is good people should see pheasant numbers rebound especially with favorable weather. MDC released pheasants at 23 sites in north Missouri between 1987 and 2000. There has been no plan for supplemental releases, but perhaps we should consider it.*

St. Louis Region

Columbia Bottom Conservation Area Visitors' Center

St. Louis

September 27, 2005

The meeting convened at 7:00 p.m., called to order by Steve Spezia, St. Louis Region Private Land Services Supervisor. He welcomed over 80 participants, noting that MDC was conducting forums throughout the state to obtain public input. He described ground rules for the event.

Mr. Spezia reported on a meeting of the region's Landowner Advisory Council immediately preceding the forum, with 20 people from the diverse group attending that meeting. He then introduced Director John Hoskins.

The Director gave brief welcoming [remarks](#), thanked the audience for attending and introduced Conservation Commissioners Cynthia Metcalfe, Lowell Mohler and Chip McGeehan. He noted that this is the third year MDC has conducted this series of forums and stressed that input from the public has been valuable and important in the Department's decision-making.

Director Hoskins opened the floor to comments and questions, which continued until about 8:40 p.m. Following brief concluding remarks by Commissioners, the formal meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m. Several participants remained and followed up with staff about concerns and needs raised during the meeting.

Note: Some comments have been placed in the "Statewide Issues" section rather than included below.

What MDC Heard . . .

Shooting Range

- I want a shooting range in the north St. Louis County area, because it is not practical to drive as far as the Busch or Henges ranges. A range is especially important in an urban area to get more youngsters involved in shooting sports and exposed to hunting.
- North St. Louis needs a shooting range closer than the ones at Busch CA and Forest 44.

Dresser Island CA

- Dresser Island CA needs work and better management. In 1991, the Corps of Engineers (USACE) put a levee around the island, supposedly to protect crop-farming that draws a lot of waterfowl. It failed, the floods came through, and the hunting has gone downhill. Brickhouse Slough is now too shallow for fishing or boat hunting. What will MDC do about Dresser Island? I recommend that the levee be cut back to the original guts – I was thrilled when the 1993 flood blew it out to them. The wetlands are silting in.
- Last winter, a duck hunter attempting to use the boat access at the Lincoln-Shields Area (USACE managed) drowned because of bad conditions created by a northwest wind. There used to be another gravel access point nearby on Dresser Island CA, but the connecting chute to that slough is now blocked. It could save lives to dredge that out and make the ramp usable again.
- Dresser Island has gone from a prosperous waterfowl area to nothing in the last 10-15 years -- since MDC took it over from the USACE. It needs water structures and crops need to be put in. Maintenance is bad, and I don't think the manager knows what a duck looks like. Once you buy it, you need to take care of it.
- Silting in is a major issue and needs serious attention. Also, blind-building and repair is physically demanding. With rising age of hunters, could you create a vehicle permit system to allow hunters to get on the Dresser Island levee (to bring in supplies) two weeks prior to inspection?
- How can people expect to involve youngsters if their parents don't set a good example of how do things right? I'm one of those "young people" folks are talking about, and concerned about the sloppy, substandard blinds that pass inspection. You need to crack down on passing substandard blinds, and do

more to show people the right way to build a blind. I've checked out the blinds this year and many are pitiful and shouldn't pass.

Columbia Bottom

- I am next-door-neighbor to the center at Columbia Bottom CA, and have had nothing but problems working with the Department. You probably saw my sign when you came in. MDC asked me for a road and water easement, to which I agreed if they would pave the road. I gave the easement, but MDC backed out on the blacktop road. Instead of spending \$25,000 to pave the road, they spent \$124,000 to go around my property. They contracted with a farmer who cut my water line. I was without water for 4 days, and contamination was an issue for six weeks. A county ordinance requires that roads connecting to county roads be paved, but MDC does not have to abide by that, and chooses not to. This area was also promised security, but that has not been delivered. A man is paid to provide security but he is only here 60% of the time.
- I am a neighbor to Columbia Bottom CA, and basically agree with the other gentleman that MDC has been a difficult neighbor. One neighbor who wanted to hook into the water line you built was denied permission. Managed hunts at Columbia Bottom had a problem with no-shows, perhaps slots applied for by anti-hunters to keep the real hunters out. How can MDC deal with that; how can neighbors help?
- The biking/hiking trail at Columbia Bottom CA has little shade and is very hot on a hot day. I would like to offer the Department 1000 Osage orange trees to plant some thickets near the trail. I will provide you some publications noting the scientific value and historical significance of this tree. Meriwether Lewis first noted the species for science when camped at the confluence before the expedition departed. Can plantings be in place before the 2006 bicentennial of the expedition's return?
- Give some consideration to paving the bike trail or making a loop at Columbia Bottom CA. It would help attract more people to the area, and significantly add to a bike trail system that is heavily used. Trailnet would like to work with you on that, and would help however we could to make it work.
- At Columbia Bottom, you should redraw the morning of special hunts to refill no-show hunting slots. Also, extend dove hunting to the areas where you plan to create wetlands, at least between now and when your get them flooded.
- I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE SOYBEAN FIELDS CONVERTED TO NATIVE GRASSLAND. I BELIEVE SOME POOLS OF WATER WOULD BE VERY BENEFICIAL TO THE WATERFOWL, WADING BIRDS AND SHOREBIRDS. THANK YOU. (WRITTEN-SL)
- CONCERNING YOUR MEETING ABOUT THE AREA: I THINK THE TRAIL DISTANCES SHOULD BE MARKED (IF THEY AREN'T NOW) SO THAT PEOPLE KNOW HOW FAR A LOOP IS, OR IF THEY MIGHT WANT TO TURN BACK AFTER A CERTAIN DISTANCE. ALSO, I THINK A SCENIC POINT BINOCULAR STAND MIGHT BE NICE AT THE CONFLUENCE. I HAVEN'T BEEN HERE FOR AWHILE; GREAT JOB! (WRITTEN-SL)
- I WOULD LIKE TO SEE MORE WING DAMS CONSTRUCTED IN THE AREA, ESPECIALLY UPSTREAM FROM THE BOAT LAUNCH RAMP AND OUT TO THE ISLAND DOWNSTREAM FROM THE CONFLUENCE, A CAUSEWAY. THE NOTCHING OF THE DIKES YOU HAVE COULD BE IMPROVED IN MY OPINION BY USING CULVERT PIPE IN THE GAP AND COVERING IT WITH ROCK, THAT WAY FISHER-PEOPLE CAN ACCESS THE DIKE OUT TO THE END OF IT. (WRITTEN-SL)
- MY HOPE IS THAT SOME DAY WALNUT TREES, WILD CHERRY TREES, HICKORY NUT TREES, MULBERRY TREES, PERSIMMONS, PAWPAWS, BLACKHAWKS, WILD GRAPES (2 KINDS), PIN OAK TREES (FOR TURKEYS), PECAN TREES, ELDERBERRIES, BLACKBERRIES, GOOSEBERRIES WILL BE PLANTED SO THAT WILDLIFE AND TWO-LEGGED ANIMALS (PEOPLE) CAN ENJOY THE BOUNTY OF THE LAND. (WRITTEN-SL)

Miscellaneous

- I am interested in rivers, particularly the Meramec and Missouri. Collaborate with other groups to enhance the river network. Bruce Babbitt (former Secretary of Interior) thought the Missouri should be considered a scenic river. Environmental planners at East-West Gateway Coordinating Council are working on development and looking for ways to assure it protects rather than destroys water quality.
- MDC's community conservationists are to be commended for work on watershed planning. La Barque Creek has high quality of habitat and scenery. This project is a unique and an important step to help people that live and work in this watershed appreciate and protect what they have. I commend the leadership offered by the Department and hope you continue to provide leadership and support for such partnership efforts.

- What is MDC's position on the use of Tax Increment Financing and eminent domain to build in floodplains? Can you comment on the Lakeside 370 project and the Great Rivers Habitat efforts regarding St. Peters floodplain?
- I have poaching problems on my land.
- In dealing with our mosquito problems, can we do something like introducing bullfrogs to help control them?
- I want to commend MDC for its partnerships in St. Louis, like the eagle days held on the Chain of Rocks Bridge.
- Creve Coeur Lake is a good example of an area with major goose problems. Can't you work with local authorities to shut it down to other uses and let people hunt there a couple days each year?
- Stream bank erosion is a big problem. MDC helps deal with it, but could do more to encourage small impoundments on private land. Impoundments function to provide stormwater retention, important in urban areas, while providing places for geese and various recreations. My neighbor has a small pond and there are geese on it all the time.
- Does MDC have any jurisdiction at Alton Lock and Dam? Big rip-rap there is tough to walk on for a bank fisherman like me. Can you help get some access steps that help anglers get down to the water's edge, like those at Carlyle Lake? (SL)
- HOW DO YOU GUYS NOT KNOW? THE OPPORTUNITIES YOU ARE MISSING NOT TO MAKE THE REVENUE IN THIS STATE. AND DECLINE THE PROGRAMS TO CREATE THE FUTURE SPORTSMEN OF MISSOURI. YOU HAVE A LOT OF HOLES TO FILL. FROM THE PROPOSAL OF A NORTH COUNTY SHOOTING RANGE TO COMMERCIAL PROSPERITY. MORE INFORMATION TO THE PUBLIC. (WRITTEN-SL)

What MDC Said . . .

- *MDC works closely with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers to manage areas in the Mississippi River. The area around Dresser Island is of mutual concern, and we will look carefully at problems identified tonight and coordinate with USACE to solve them.*
- *St. Louis regional staff made a big effort this year to take good photos of good blinds, hoping to better show people – young and old – what needs to be done to fix them up right next year.*
- *MDC needs good dialogue between staff and neighbors. While we cannot comment on matters that are in litigation concerning Columbia Bottom CA, we will work to resolve problems.*
- *The Department encourages neighbors of Columbia Bottom CA to participate in area special hunts and activities. We have a lot of flexibility to adapt managed hunt procedures to particular area needs, with the bottom line for us being to do what it takes to keep the herd using the area at a controlled level.*
- *Security is an important issue at Columbia Bottom CA. We have staff here during the day, and a guard on site six nights weekly. When the guard is not here, we have contracted with the city to get four patrols an hour and they stay here. If there is ever a specific security incident that is not being addressed, people should call their conservation agent immediately.*
- *We encourage anyone with poaching problems to contact a conservation agent. We will work to solve your problem. Note that MDC's job is to issue tickets, but that prosecution is the purview of the county prosecutor. Penalties are set by the local courts.*
- *We will talk to the Corps of Engineers and see what can be done about better bank fishing access at the Alton Dam.*

Ozark Region

Texas County Fairgrounds Community Building Houston September 29, 2005

The meeting convened at 6:45 p.m., called to order by Bob Cunningham, Ozark Region Private Land Services Supervisor. He welcomed over 59 participants and recognized Amy Hamilton of the Department's Ozark Regional Conservation Advisory Council; Texas County Commissioners Don Shelhammer, Linda Garrett and Joe Whetstine; and Texas County Sheriff Carl Watson. He described the format for discussions to follow. After giving a brief overview of the region, Mr. Cunningham then introduced Director John Hoskins.

Director Hoskins gave brief welcoming remarks and thanked the audience for attending. He introduced Conservation Commissioner Chip McGeehan and U. S. Forest Service Supervisor Elrand D. Denson, who has just recently transferred to the area. After brief introductory [remarks](#), the floor was opened to questions.

After the discussions recorded below, Director Hoskins made concluding remarks, noting special interest in law enforcement this evening and underlining the importance of education and citizen involvement in that effort. If people understand why conservation is important, he said, most will do the right thing. Commissioner McGeehan expressed his appreciation for people's candor, and for what he had learned. He said that there is a lot to do, but that there are 49 other states that would like to be where Missouri is today.

The meeting adjourned shortly after 8:00.

Note: Some comments have been placed in the "Statewide Issues" section rather than included below.

What MDC Heard . . .

- Thank you for help on my property.
- I've been to some nice family programs at Runge Nature Center, but it is a long drive home to Salem. Can you do more to bring the same types of programs to areas without nature centers?
- Sericea lespedeza is a serious problem to control, an exotic that is widespread and spreading. We need help to control it and more information about how to deal with it and its dormant seeds. We also need help to educate absentee landowners that its presence on their land can cause problems for neighbors.
- South of Blue Buck Tower on highway 181 the Forest Service has clearcut some areas using loggers who left the area looking "like a hurricane went through." There are no trees left that haven't been damaged. Why not require more selective cutting and better cleanup?
- Enforcement has some new problems like methamphetamine, but it sure doesn't seem to be what it used to be. My first ticket was over at Sand Shoals, where agent Bob Cook nabbed us. He'd waded the river around a bend upstream to watch what we were doing, and then, after writing the ticket, asked us for a ride back across! We need more agents like that!
- I am concerned about feral hogs because lots of people are making big money guiding hunts for them. I don't expect populations to go down as long as there is money in it.
- I hope everyone who is concerned about the law enforcement problems tonight understands how important the ballot issue to build a new Texas County Justice Center is. Now, we only have 24 beds and are often deciding who to let out to make room for the worst. If you are interested in law enforcement, please support the bond issue.
- Can MDC twist the arm of the Forest Service to put native grass and better game habitat back onto their new 1000 acres in Howell County at the Texas County line (previously Sheeks Ranch)?
- Does the Conservation Commission have any sort of neighborhood watch program?

What MDC Said . . .

- *Nature Centers provide excellent programs, but serve their immediate vicinity best. When the new MDC facility is finished at Winona, it will be a good venue for programs like those at Runge Conservation Nature Center. Meanwhile, check out offerings at the West Plains MDC office. They do many evening and day programs just like the nature centers – our website has them on a calendar, or you can get on a mailing list for notices from the regional office.*
- *Clearcuts can look awful, although there are standards on both MDC and Forest Service lands that cutters are required to meet. The Forest Service will make sure that the area meets its standards before closing the contract that allowed cutting there. There are also private-land in-holdings in the forest: is it possible that the cut you describe is on private land? Many private landowners do allow timber cuts that cause damage that MDC or Forest Service would not allow.*
- *The Sheriff's office in Texas County has a methamphetamine officer. He picks up meth trash as part of his job, and gets calls on a daily basis. Sheriff Watson promises to take care of it – meth sites have evidence, toxic waste, and sometimes people looking for trouble.*
- *Feral hogs are a big problem that many state and federal agencies are working to eliminate, but agents have a lot more territory than they can regularly cover. We can confirm that individuals involved in hunting have illegally released hogs. If you have any information about people doing this, you need to contact MDC.*
- *It is critical to have public support, especially people who call MDC when they think a violation is occurring. They also need to let their legislators and prosecutors know how stiff they want penalties to be. If people call, we can set up decoys or take other actions to control poaching.*
- *We understand that a large tract of land in northern Howell County, recently acquired by the Forest Service, will be managed out of the Ava Forest Service office and that they plan to keep it open. The District Ranger is, at the time of the forum, in the South working on hurricane recovery, one of many things that slows down changing things on the ground. In any event, be patient because it is expensive and takes time to convert fescue back to native grasses. We will work to help however we can.*
- *Neighborhood watch is a good idea, and MDC has always depended on support from citizens to report violations. In Texas County, the Sheriff reports having several neighborhood watch programs in place and he would like to have more. MDC cooperates to support these programs.*

Central Region

Mid-County Fire Department Station Camdenton October 4, 2005

The meeting convened at 6:35 p.m., called to order by Bob DeWitt, Central Region Private Land Services Supervisor. He welcomed over 39 participants and made several introductions:

- Mary A. Carroz and Bill Ambrose, Landowner Advisory Council members;
- Steve Johnson, Executive Director of Missouri River Communities' Network;
- Conservation Commissioners Lowell Mohler and Chip McGeehan; and
- Director John Hoskins and other members of MDC staff.

Mr. DeWitt then turned the meeting over to Director Hoskins who welcomed and thanked the audience for attending. He reviewed his 28 years with the Department, including several spent working in Camden County. After a few [remarks](#) about the objectives of the forum, he opened the floor to comments and questions.

After the questions ended, Commission Chairman Mohler remarked that it had been a good discussion and an important opportunity to stop and talk. He talked about how important it is for more people to engage in conservation, noting that he has done enough to see a few quail on his land, but that seeing a lot of quail will depend on whether his neighbors do similar things. He observed that there is a lot of conservation Missouri can be proud of, noting that the Missouri River runs cleaner today because of MDC efforts, increasing use of no-till agriculture, and programs like the Conservation Reserve Program.

The forum concluded about 8:30 p.m., with discussions continuing for some time afterward one-on-one and in small groups.

What MDC Heard . . .

Lake of the Ozarks

- What is MDC's involvement in Ameren's recently announced Shoreline Management Plan? At least a couple of people said they came because they thought MDC would announce a position here. One said it places "new restrictions on what I can do 25 feet up from my property line." One wrote, "I am not in favor of the Conservation being involved with Ameren concerning the management of the Lake of the Ozarks."
- Fishing is good at the Lake of the Ozarks, with most people attracted by the fish that prosper here – bass, crappie, catfish – rather than the ones you stock like stripers and walleye. This tells me that good fishing does not depend on making changes like the Shoreline Management Plan.
- Will MDC review Ameren's plan, especially new features regulating withdrawals of water, and runoff of water into the lake?
- MDC needs to provide more accesses to the Lake of the Ozarks, especially in the mid-Lake area.
- How does someone decide what is wetland, for example the land back in a lake cove?

Missouri River

- Missouri River Communities Network would like to see demonstration projects with harvestable hardwood forests in the Missouri River floodplain, a crop that would tolerate flooding but produce marketable high-quality timber.

Miscellaneous

- Are armadillos protected? Is it okay to kill them?
- There is an outbreak of blue tongue disease in Osage County around Loose Creek.
- What about black bears? How far north are they coming in Missouri? Cougars?
- I would like to see MDC sell itself more as a service organization. You can do more to change people by promoting your services over your regulations.
- I think MDC sells itself effectively, at least to people who care. We bought tiny trees from MDC in the 70s that are beautiful trees now. Most but not all people do care about the birds, wildlife, fish and conservation services, and they know MDC helps.
- Is MDC trying to reach young future farmers?
- At Rudolf Bennitt CA, the horse trails have caused enough damage that ruts knocked me off my ATV. Since Forestry manages the area, I suspect the open ground doesn't get quite the attention the forested areas do. (KC)

What MDC Said . . .

- *Armadillos are naturally expanding their range into Missouri and are among several species that can do significant property damage. When they damage a landowner's property, they can be shot or otherwise taken. They are not mentioned in the Wildlife Code, and a change may be in order to clarify when and how armadillos can be taken.*
- *This year we have found cases of "blue tongue," more properly named epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD), in Osage, Miller, and Camden Counties in this region. This was somewhat expected because of the summer drought.*
- *MDC plays an advisory role in planning for the Lake of the Ozarks. We provide technical assistance to Ameren and others, but MDC does not have authority to regulate and does not want authority to regulate private land use around the Lake. Our staff participated on various working groups involved in Ameren's relicensing process, especially related to the major fishkill at the dam in 2002. The Department generally supports efforts to maintain water quality and protect fish habitat, but any mandates for action stem from authority other than ours. The Shoreline Management Plan is based on a template FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) has used on other lakes in the country, adapted by Ameren to Lake of the Ozarks.*
- *MDC worked hard to reach agreements with Ameren on some important fisheries issues, primarily at the dam and below. We found a number of opportunities to work with Ameren to improve fishing without compromising their priorities and without added regulation. Lake shoreline management can affect habitat, but most of the concern with it lies in the agencies required to enforce compliance with the Clean Water Act and other federal laws.*
- *MDC plans call for building two more accesses on Lake of the Ozarks, one to be in the Hurricane Deck area. A lot of things must come together to add an access – funding to acquire a site, a willing seller, a price at or below appraised value, adequate water depths, suitable access, sound engineering requirements and state and federal permits and clearances.*
- *"Wetland" is a term in common use that also has a very technical meaning. Determination of the technical "wetland status" is based on a number of factors, primarily the type of soil and the vegetation present. Wetland determination is important for several federal laws, and is largely evaluated by federal agencies using federal criteria. MDC values wetlands, but we depend on others to determine which areas are wetlands for regulatory purposes. On Department areas and projects, we have to comply with the same wetland laws as everyone else.*
- *Bear sightings are increasing, and some occur pretty far north – one was seen in Jefferson City a few years ago. We also have seen some mountain lions – road kills mainly -- but don't know that any are living and rearing young in Missouri. Both animals can and do roam considerable distances.*
- *MDC is a service organization and we hope people understand that. Creation of the Private Land Services Division, and the priority we have assigned to staffing that division, makes a major statement that we see ourselves as helpers. The Wildlife Code regulates use of fish and wildlife, but as far as private land and property go, MDC is not a regulatory agency.*

- *Rudolph Bennitt CA is heavily used by horse riders and a spider web of trails evolved there by use more than by design. Erosion has resulted. We are working to correct those problems, but trying to do so with the cooperation of the riding community. We studied the situation and worked with local clubs to identify best solutions. The area should end up with fewer, shorter, trails, but they will be better maintained and more valuable to riders as a result. The area is managed by Forestry Division, but all Divisions participate in management decisions and activities there.*

Kansas City Region

Media Forum Room, State Fair Community College

Sedalia

October 11, 2005

The meeting convened at 6:40 p.m., called to order by Phil Philips, Kansas City Outreach and Education Regional Supervisor. He welcomed over thirty participants. After introducing Conservation Commissioners Lowell Mohler and "Chip" McGeehan, he recognized members of MDC staff and turned the meeting over to Director John Hoskins.

Director Hoskins welcomed and thanked the audience for attending. After a few [remarks](#) about the objectives of the forum, he opened the floor to comments and questions. These concluded just before 8:00 p.m.

Director Hoskins and Commissioners Mohler and McGeehan each made brief closing remarks, and some discussions continued one-on-one and in small groups following adjournment.

Note: Some comments have been placed in the "Statewide Issues" section rather than included below.

What MDC Heard . . .

- I am a contractor who works on a lot of ground, and I can tell you that the quail situation is getting better around here. However, I also know of \$5000 that was available to spend last year that didn't get spent because someone waited too long to get started. Is that money wasted? MDC's partnership with Quail Unlimited is a good thing.
- Since the floods of 1993 and 1995, how is work progressing on Missouri River, especially the lands the Corps of Engineers acquired?
- I appreciate the opportunity to offer comment in a public forum. Don't misinterpret a small crowd as lack of interest. Continue the public forums.

What MDC Said . . .

- *Federal farm programs have improved greatly, and they provide many dollars that have made a difference in quail habitat. There is still room to improve, and we are increasingly aware that some intervention is needed periodically to keep good quail habitat from declining. MDC does not lose dollars that are unspent at the end of the Fiscal Year, but we sometimes struggle to get projects done within the budgeted fiscal year.*
- *After the floods of 1993 and 1995, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) was able to buy a good deal of land along the Missouri River to mitigate for river and floodplain habitat losses associated with the navigation project. They leased much of that land to MDC to manage, set up largely for "opportunistic flooding" rather than pumped water. It has helped provide added wetlands for hunting and fishing, but these areas do not consistently provide flooded ground when desired. USACE has long term goals to acquire more such land as funds are appropriated and willing sellers offer land for sale.*

Northwest Region

Goodrich Auditorium

Cameron

October 20, 2005

The meeting convened at 7:00 p.m., called to order by John Fleming, Northwest Region Forestry Supervisor. He welcomed forty-seven participants and introduced several dignitaries including:

- Missouri Representatives John Quinn (district 7) and Jim Guest (district 5);
- Clinton County Commissioner Larry King;
- Former Representative Randall Relford;
- Professors John Rushin and Cary Chevalier of Missouri Western State University.

Mr. Fleming discussed the importance of the Landowner Advisory Council in Northwest Region, and recognized council member Martha Clark, who was present. After introducing MDC staff, Mr. Fleming gave a brief presentation which reviewed some of the major Department programs in the region and the role played by the Cameron Hunting & Fishing Club in the 1936 creation of the Conservation Commission. In 1941, the club sponsored the first Northwest Conservation Conference, in the same room where this forum was held, to plan strategies for the future of Missouri Conservation.

Mr. Fleming turned the meeting over to Director John Hoskins, who welcomed and thanked the audience for attending. He showed a two minute video of Missouri wildlife and fish that was developed for the recent meeting of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies in St. Louis (ended one day earlier than the forum). Director Hoskins made a few preliminary [remarks](#) and opened the floor to comments and questions.

The meeting concluded at 9:10 p.m., with discussions continuing afterward one-on-one and in small groups.

Note: Some comments have been placed in the "Statewide Issues" section rather than included below.

What MDC Heard . . .

MDC Areas:

- Thank you for having this meeting in Cameron. I hear a few complaints, but for the most part think MDC is doing a good job. I particularly appreciate your help in getting a shooting range set up at Elam Bend CA.
- I have hunted Pony Express CA for years, and can report that deer numbers are good but the regulations are messed up. Restrictions on antlerless deer there indicate to me that trophy hunters are controlling the Department decisions. If you leave the rules alone, hunters control over-harvest themselves – they quit coming when there aren't deer to shoot. Also, I don't understand why you are cleaning fencerows out at Pony Express CA.
- MDC areas should grow more milo or corn. I think that is a limiting factor on wildlife.
- Wabash Crossing Access is poorly kept, has vandalism, and access to shoreline is bad, especially for people who are disabled. The ramp is silted in and overhanging tree limbs scratch at your vehicle if you use it. Please improve the ramp and shoreline access.

Payments in-lieu-of-taxes:

- An issue for me is the level of payment in-lieu-of taxes. In DeKalb County, MDC owns about 4000 acres and pays the county about \$1 per acre. Farmers pay higher rates, and the county would assess MDC about twice as high.

- Could MDC pay in-lieu-of-taxes at a rate which is the average of what all adjoining landowners pay? The County Assessor could evaluate that number?

Miscellaneous:

- I am a newcomer to Caldwell County, and interested in development of Shoal Creek as a greenway or water trail. How might MDC help with that?
- I am working with MDC's Andrew County Private Land Conservationist on a CP33 practice. I have seen a decline in pheasant populations in places I don't see habitat changing. Do you know why? How is the quail effort going?
- Thanks to MDC and State Forester Bob Krepps for supporting the state Forestry Council. He's planning to retire, so I want to emphasize that commitment to urban forestry and the Forestry Council should be requirements for choosing his successor.
- Two weeks ago, I went to Poosey CA and want to say that the manager there is doing a great job. I also work for the county and deal with road rock, and commend MDC's Gary Nevins for the great help the Department has provided in that regard.
- It is getting harder to find places to hunt. Landowners don't allow people on their land for fear of liability or to reserve use for their family. I am one who hunts CAs, and find it harder to find deer today. At Holmes Bend access, I couldn't find a single squirrel.
- I took my six and seven year old girls to the shooting range at Gallatin to show them how to shoot. That's important. My ex-wife objected to it, claiming an MDC employee told her there is an age limit on kids that young using a firearm. Can you clarify that for me?
- YOU HAVE A GREAT DEPARTMENT AND I'M PROUD TO HAVE YOU IN CAMERON. THE CAMERON HISTORICAL SOCIETY WOULD LOVE TO HOST THE FISH DISPLAY IN THE NEAR FUTURE. -- WRITTEN
- YOU DID NOT PAY ANY ATTENTION TO PEOPLE. -- WRITTEN
- MANY PEOPLE DIDN'T GET THE MESSAGE THAT YOU WERE HAVING THIS FORUM. THANKS. -- WRITTEN
- I HAD TO LEAVE EARLY, BUT HOPE THE DISCUSSION TURNED TO TAKING CARE OF LAND, PONDS, ETC. NOT JUST HUNTING. I WAS HOPING THERE WOULD BE SOME DISCUSSION ON THOSE ISSUES. I AM WANTING TO IMPROVE MY PROPERTY FOR NATURE AND WILDLIFE, HAVE WORKED WITH MDC STAFF AND APPRECIATE ALL HELP AND SUGGESTIONS I RECEIVE. -- WRITTEN

What MDC Said . . .

Payments in-lieu-of-taxes:

- *We respect the opinions of people who think there might be a better way to set rates for MDC's county payments in-lieu-of-taxes (ILT), but the Department has to operate within the law. Taxes are set for everyone based on actual use, not the use of land belonging to neighbors. I doubt that many landowners would want their tax-rate set that way, and there is no legal basis for applying a totally different basis for MDC. Remember that CAs belong to all Missourians, and that ILT-payments were specifically authorized by them. Also realize that MDC helps counties in ways other than ILT payments. We help pay for roads accessing areas, manage most cropping by hiring local farmers, and assist rural fire departments. We try to contribute as good neighbor, doing what the law requires of us and more.*

MDC Areas

- *There is no intent to manage Pony Express CA or any CA for trophies. We have liberalized seasons to encourage more deer take in North Missouri, including expanded seasons, higher limits, and the four-point pilot project. That's had some success, but also increased harvest pressure on MDC land. In the deer public meetings held around the state in 2004, one message consistently heard was that people who hunted MDC areas in north Missouri said there were few deer on them. We surveyed to find out about this, and actual aerial counts last winter (deer show up clearly in the snow) showed a density of 8 deer per square mile at Pony Express, way below targets. On this and other areas where surveys confirmed what most*

people were telling us, we restricted doe harvest on the MDC areas. Rebuilding populations there is important, because so many hunters have only public land to hunt on.

- *Fence clearing on MDC areas like Pony Express CA is part of a continued effort to maintain early succession habitat. When fencerow trees grow too big and vegetation gets too thick, habitat quality declines. We have become increasingly aware – and this applies to MDC land, CRP land and other land – that periodic intervention is needed to keep quail/small game habitat productive.*
- *We will take a look at Wabash Crossing and see what can be done to improve it.*
- *We like to help build ranges because they are important for many reasons, including safety and recreation. We often have a difficult time locating appropriate sites for new ranges. They must go in the right topography, be safely engineered, and meet legal restrictions like location over 1000 yards from the nearest residence. We hope the Elam Bend site will work out, and if not we will keep trying.*

Miscellaneous:

- *If a greenway or water trail on Shoal Creek becomes a local priority, MDC may be able to provide advice and information about the fisheries and stream corridor. Many agencies would need to be involved in such a project, and MDC's role is limited to forests, fisheries and wildlife. Streams, stream corridors, wetlands, etc. are subject to a variety of regulations administered by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers and other agencies.*
- *We have seen some declines in pheasants in parts of northwest Missouri in recent years, perhaps due to weather or hard to notice changes in habitat. The good news is that counts are up this year. We have not stocked any new pheasants recently, and do not have plans to do so.*
- *Quail work in northwest region is making progress, with focus areas identified in several counties. Regional staff worked with the interested public to create a plan and quail council. This year, these efforts have resulted in management on a total of over 10,000 acres in one focus area, with results showing in recent call counts. The quail solution depends on citizen interest and actions by private landowners like these.*
- *There is a minimum age requirement (eleven years) for buying a firearms deer or turkey hunting permit, but youngsters can hunt or use ranges when younger than that. We are not aware of any laws forbidding a parent to show youngsters how to safely handle firearms, but would recommend parental supervision whenever younger kids use or handle firearms.*

Southeast Region

Black River Coliseum

Poplar Bluff

October 27, 2005

The meeting convened at 7:00 p.m., called to order by Joe Garvey, Southeast Region Forestry Supervisor. He welcomed 53 participants and explained meeting plans.

Tony Jaco, Southeast Region Private Land Services Supervisor, introduced Landowner Advisory Council members Jeffrey Holloway (Puxico), Dr. Joe Baker (Dexter), and Bruce Eskew (Dexter). The Council was established in 2002, and consists of landowners who meet 3-times a year with Regional Coordinating Team members (MDC division leaders in the region). LACs provide another way MDC works to understand citizen priorities and better explain programs.

Jaco then turned the meeting over to Director John Hoskins, who welcomed and thanked people for attending. He introduced Conservation Commissioners Lowell Mohler and Chip McGeehan and his mother, Eudora Hoskins, who lives in nearby Carter County. He showed a 2-minute video about Missouri wildlife and fish, made a few [remarks](#) and opened the floor to comments and questions.

At 8:40 there were no more participants asking to speak. The Director thanked Representative Billy Pat Wright (Dexter, District 159) for attending. Commissioners Mohler and McGeehan made brief concluding remarks. The meeting adjourned at 8:45, with discussions continuing for some time afterward one-on-one and in small groups.

Note: Some comments have been placed in the "Statewide Issues" section rather than included below.

What MDC Heard . . .

MDC Areas:

- I attended your recent forum at Duck Creek CA, and liked the plans for renovations discussed there. It created a lot of interest in the vicinity and by people who hunt or fish there.
- Can you use the magazine or some other mechanism to update people on what is happening at Duck Creek CA, especially those who attended the October 4 meeting?
- I am concerned about Duck Creek Conservation Area. In December of last year, the site was "atrocious." I couldn't locate my blind as there was only one sign showing the way, and it was in poor shape. They had taken it off a mound of ground and put it in the water. What can you do to help? (SL)
- Thank you for coming here, I am especially glad to hear about the Department's plans to improve Duck Creek CA.
- There is a problem with the ramp at Hendrickson Access: when you launch a boat there in low water, you may not be able to pull trailer out. There is raised ledge at the foot of the ramp, probably designed to let people know when they have backed to the end. However, you can back across and in the process hang up your trailer so you cannot pull it out.
- There was a catfish tournament in Cape Girardeau recently, privately sponsored but held at an MDC ramp, with MDC help to manage users. That was a very positive thing.
- I am concerned about Otter Slough and Coon Island CA. Ever since former manager Ken Berry left, I wonder who is taking care of them. Is there no money to put in crops? (SL)

Miscellaneous:

- Thank you for this forum. I am a consulting forester and having a hard time because of MDC. The Department's free services attract most landowners, and your recent extension (three to ten) of days per year staff can spend with one landowner made this competition worse. You hired an assistant of mine, leaving me less able to serve my customers. MDC should look carefully at a Conservation Federation of Missouri resolution from 2002 that called for MDC to work more closely with consulting foresters, create a memorandum of understanding for a working relationship in which the Department and private sector both do what they do best.
- Could you report what MDC is accomplishing in the Bootheel region to improve habitat along the ditches and other marginal ground?
- What is MDC's relationship with the Gaylord Lab, which I understand is undergoing major changes. Can you help keep it going?

What MDC Said . . .

MDC Areas

- *Duck Creek CA is one of five MDC wetlands that are over 50 years old and in need of renovation. We are now digesting public input and doing engineering studies for a major renovation. The Conservation Commission is committed to revitalize the area, but it will cost a lot and take several years to complete.*
- *The magazine may not be a practical way to provide information about Duck Creek renovations, but we will likely hold other meetings and provide information in other ways. Renovation is a slow process, but don't hesitate to call our offices if you want information you are not getting.*
- *We know there is a problem with the ramp at Hendickson Access. We tried to fix it by putting in rock below the ramp to avoid the drop-off problem. We will check it again, and see what we can do to make it more useful. [Editor's note: in early November, the curb was removed from the bottom of the ramp, and it should now be in good condition for use even in low water conditions.]*

Miscellaneous:

- *MDC provides free forestry services because we recognize that most of the forests are on private land, and we must impact private forests to affect the whole resource. Only about 10% of Missouri forests have any professional management – either MDC or consulting forester – and we want to see more of it better managed. There certainly is a lot that needs to be done, and we will be glad to discuss further how to develop better relationships. We certainly recommend to many landowners that they consider private sector consulting services.*
- *In southeast Missouri, widespread cropping has dramatically reduced some kinds of wildlife habitat. MDC is working hard to partner with drainage districts, electric cooperatives, counties, and landowners to use uncropped remnants to provide habitat for upland game. We are having some success, and appreciate the role of Landowner Advisory Council in making things happen. Conservation is a service business, and we must in most cases provide services to landowners to get the right kind of habitat work done.*
- *MDC has collaborated with the Gaylord Lab for more than 50 years. The retirement of Dr. Leigh Frederickson drew attention to funding and long term management issues for the lab. The University of Missouri is looking for ways to fund the program and endow a chair, but we don't know for sure what the future will bring. The bottom line for MDC is that we want to continue strong cooperation with the lab in wetland and water bird research. We recently hired two resource scientists to work there and ensure continued focus on wetland work.*

Southwest Region

Springfield Conservation Nature Center Auditorium

Springfield

November 8, 2005

The meeting convened at 7:00 p.m., called to order by Kurt Kysar, Southwest Region Protection Supervisor. He welcomed over 85 participants, and introduced Conservation Commissioner Lowell Mohler (Jefferson City) and many of the 18 Department staff present.

Bob Schroeppel, Southwest Region Private Land Services Supervisor, explained the role of the Regional Landowner Council in helping the Department communicate with people and understand their wishes. He introduced the five of the Council's seven members who were present: Beverly Kelly (Springfield), Jerry Tracy (Fair Grove), Jerry Hickenbottom (Joplin), Stan O'Daniel (Lynchburg), and Rodney Barnes (Mountain Grove). Former council member David Ballou (Ozark) joined the meeting a few minutes later.

Warren Rose, Southwest Region Outreach and Education Supervisor, gave a brief review of the region. He reported on current activities and on progress with issues raised at last year's forum in Joplin.

Director John Hoskins then took the lead and gave brief welcoming [remarks](#). He introduced former State Representative Ken Legan and local Farm Bureau leader Greg Matthews. Hoskins led through an hour and a half of discussion and welcomed Representative Mike Cunningham (District 145, Marshfield) who joined the discussion in progress. Director Hoskins concluded the question and answer session by recognizing Commissioner Mohler who thanked the audience for taking time to attend and speak out. The meeting adjourned at 9:00, with discussions continuing afterwards between participants and Department staff.

Note: Some comments have been placed in the "Statewide Issues" section rather than included below.

What MDC Heard . . .

Horse Trails:

- The area manager at Lead Mine CA is doing an excellent job, so please don't misconstrue some suggestions to do even better. Southwest Trail Riders like and use the area. We offered four work days to help on the area this year – but were disappointed that there was only one chore identified for us to do. We want to do our part and feel we're not being used to the best of our capabilities. We also feel like we are the only organization that is losing at Lead Mine: trails get closed, and we don't always see a clear reason to do that. We volunteer our time to work hoping our maintenance can allow you to keep trails open.
- There are horse trail issues at Pleasant Hope CA. The only place to unload horses has only one good parking place, and it is located next to the shooting range, a bad place for horses. Riders need a better place to unload. There is a place they used to use, but the trail from that site has been closed.

Fishing in SW Missouri:

- Fly-fishing clubs I'm part of are concerned about trout fishing opportunities. One concern is Crane Creek, home of the naturally reproducing McCloud strain of trout. Is MDC going to stock trout below the bridge? Might that hurt the wild trout?
- Trout parks besides Bennett Spring now have catch & release areas, and I'd like to know when Bennett might get the same.
- There are laws about disturbing a stream bottom. At Lake Taneycomo, aren't the people who stand and stir the bottom disturbing the stream bottom and doing something that's against the law.

- There is a shortage of fish habitat in Table Rock Lake, and I've offered to tow logs coming down the James Arm out to a deep place and sink them. Why won't the Corps of Engineers let me do that?
- T.R.A.C.E.T.S STANDS FOR TABLE ROCK AREA CONSCIOUS EFFORTS TOWARD STOCKING, AND ITS MISSION IS "LAKE PRESERVATION THROUGH RESTORATION AND EDUCATION." IT IS A NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATION DEDICATED TO IMPROVING THE LAKE, AND WORKS WITH MDC AND OTHER AGENCIES TO MOVE FORWARD. IT SUBMITTED A PETITION FROM 514 SIGNERS WHO WOULD "SUPPORT STOCKING FISH IN TABLE ROCK LAKE." (SW -- WRITTEN)

Miscellaneous:

- Thank you for coming down here to Springfield. Young people are important to the future, and I've encouraged several of my students at Missouri State University to be here tonight (8 hands held up). We have some strong resource related programs at MSU, and appreciate the work of MDC and the many ways it helps our program.
- I lived five miles downriver from Stockton dam when it was built. It was for flood control, but then they wanted to buy all the good farmland downstream to flood it daily. MDC helped fight that in court. Landowners lost in court, but have since gotten relief through politics.
- What are the chances of getting bear management started in Missouri, perhaps in cooperation with Arkansas?
- WHEN YOU PLANT FOOD PLOTS, HIRE FARMERS TO DO IT AND YOU WILL HAVE BETTER RESULTS. (SW -- WRITTEN)
- DON RUZICKA AND RANDY HAAS ARE DOING A GREAT JOB! (SW -- WRITTEN)

What MDC Said . . .

Horse Trails:

- *We appreciate horse groups that volunteer to help with trails, and hope you continue to work with staff to identify the important trail-related projects. It's important for both MDC and volunteers to work closely and plan ahead. Our areas are all multi-use areas. Trails closures may not be related to maintenance or habitat damage, but to use conflicts. It also means that work projects have to be scheduled with consideration for other users. We consider Lead Mines CA one of our "success areas" for horse use, in part because of groups like yours – but it sounds like we still have work to do.*
- *You identify a good example of a multi-use conflict at Pleasant Hope CA – unloading horses next to a shooting range may spook the horses, and using limited parking for trailers may keep someone from using the range. Our local management team will look at the situation and work with you and other users to find answers. We have many customers and only so much land, staff and funding. Everyone has to recognize that the answer cannot always be what you want. However, we should always take time to understand what you want and to explain if our response is not to your satisfaction. That is exactly why this forum is happening tonight.*

SW Region Areas and Fisheries

- *MDC values the special character of Crane Creek, and is watching stocks of the wild McCloud trout very closely. Drought last year effectively drained the upper creek and emptied it of fish. We have made no plans to stock, and are cautiously optimistic that, with water back, populations are recovering.*
- *We have not found a good place to specify for catch & release at Bennett Spring, although we'll keep the idea in mind. The stream is shorter and the area has more anglers than the other trout parks.*
- *The "Taneycomo shuffle" is a problem, but it is hard to prosecute and get cases through court – too easy for the angler to say he "just slipped." An issue of this kind is not a high priority for courts dealing with methamphetamine, child-abuse, etc. Since enforcement is so difficult, we concentrate on this as an ethics and education problem. When people understand the ethical issue and potential for fishery damage, we hope this abuse will be better controlled.*

Miscellaneous:

- *Cover is one element needed for fish in Table Rock Lake, and MDC does work with the Corps of Engineers on projects to improve it. However, the Corps has a number of obligations in lake management – navigation, safety, dam operation – that require their consideration and input on what sort of habitat might be added and where it should be put.*
- *Missouri does have bears and we have more bear conflicts this year than ever. They are coming north from Arkansas where they were reintroduced. MDC has not reintroduced and does not intend to reintroduce bears into Missouri. Generally, the idea is not popular with the public or landowners. Our management program now emphasizes help to deal with conflicts, education and, where needed, removing bears that cause damage. If populations continue to grow, we may have to consider other management options, including hunting.*

In Conclusion

The Missouri Department of Conservation places a high value on listening to the public. Conservation Forums are an excellent tool for gathering input, and for developing better relations with supporters, critics and others who are interested in Missouri's resources.

In the past 3 years, MDC has conducted over 60 public meetings to gather input. Thirty of those related to deer management decisions made in 2004. This is the fourth series of forums in three years -- each series providing eight sessions, one in each region, but normally in a different community every year. By moving the regional forums around, we have been able to hear from a wide range of communities, large and small. These forums elicit input on general concerns and answer questions. Reports like this one help us digest the input, and allow the public to check and make sure we do what we say.

In addition to forums and public meetings, MDC gathers information in a variety of ways, including public opinion surveys, public use questionnaires, daily phone and mail input to field staff and offices, concerns relayed by legislators, and attending or co-sponsoring public meetings held by others.

If at any time you have an issue or concern, please contact any of our staff or offices.

TO ALL WHO PARTICIPATED,
THANK YOU
FOR YOUR TIME, IDEAS AND CANDOR!